

**PETER TROWER: A POET LAUREATE FOR BRITISH
COLUMBIA**

by

Mark Vincent Diotte
Bachelor of Arts, Simon Fraser University 2003

THESIS
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

In the
Department
of
English

© Mark Vincent Diotte 2006

SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2006

All rights reserved. This work may not be
reproduced in whole or in part, by photocopy
or other means, without permission of the author.

APPROVAL

Name: Mark Vincent Diotte

Degree: Master of Arts in the Department of English

Title of Thesis: Peter Trower: A Poet Laureate for British Columbia

Examining Committee:

Chair: Margaret Linley
Assistant Professor, Department of English

David Stouck
Senior Supervisor
Professor Emeritus, Department of English

Jeff Derksen
Supervisor
Assistant Professor, Department of English

Laurie Ricou
External Examiner
Department of English
University of British Columbia

Date Defended: 15 November 2006



DECLARATION OF PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

ABSTRACT

While poet, author, and musician Peter Trower has been part of the literary community of Canada for over forty years, his work has largely been ignored by academics. This thesis attempts to rectify this deficiency by presenting Trower's poetry as crucial to understanding aspects of British Columbia's history and culture, and the flow of poetic tradition from Europe to Canada in the twentieth century. Further, this project delineates the unique poetic of Trower and how it affirms typically negative human experiences such as absence and sorrow. For contemporary readers, Trower's poetry addresses concerns of gender; it reveals how masculinity is constructed in terms of a systemic hegemony as well as how the view of masculinity as homogenous and inevitable is inadequate. This project solidifies Trower's proper location and importance in the literary and academic community.

DEDICATION

To my wife Laura and my family on both sides, all of whom worried excessively that this project would never get started, let alone completed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to those who have supported and encouraged me, especially in my intellectual endeavours, and in this work, in particular: David Stouck, Eric Swanick, Margaret Linley, Tom Grieve, Jeff Derksen, Laurie Ricou and Mary Hooper, Literary Executor for Milton Acorn. A special note of thanks to Geoff Madoc-Jones who made both The Trower Collection at Simon Fraser University and my own research possible, and of course to Peter Trower, a poet and a gentleman who abided my naiveté and persistent questioning in the undertaking of this project.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Glossary	vii
Chapter One: Biography	1
Chapter Two: Logging, Working Class Concerns & Peter Trower	23
The Resource Economy	25
Chapter Three: The Channeling of Poetic Tradition	55
The Romantic-Humanist Tradition	61
Canadian Modernism	69
The Georgian Influence.....	74
The Tears in Things.....	83
Chapter Four: Constructions of Masculinity in the Poetry of Peter Trower	96
Masculinity in the Woods	100
Triangulation, Desire and Homosocial Bonds	113
Multiple Masculinities and the Self-Made Man.....	123
Appendices	134
Appendix A: “Remembering Al, A Tribute to Al Purdy”	135
Appendix B: “The Ballad of Peter Trower”	138
Appendix C: Works of Peter Trower	140
Works Cited	143

GLOSSARY

cat skinner	A slang term for the operator of a bulldozer.
caulk boots	Traditional footwear worn by loggers. Heavy leather boots with spiked soles.
chokerboy	<i>syn.</i> Chokerman. The logger who applies chokers, or wire cables with couplings, around cut timber to drag or skid it out of the bush. The lowest paid job in the woods.
crummies	Company bus or truck used to transport loggers to and from the job site.
donkey	Originally a steam powered engine mounted on a sled. Later, donkey engines were fuelled by gas and diesel.
donkey puncher	Adapted from bull puncher when, prior to the advent of the engine, oxen were used to pull logs from the setting to the landing. A goad was used to drive the oxen, and thus the name bull puncher. A donkey puncher operated the donkey engine.
greenhorn	An inexperienced or foolish person; new recruit.
hooker	Refers to steam logging days. The hooktender or hooker was a man who set out lines for the hauling roads. He would also be responsible for the crew bringing logs from the stumps or setting to the landing.
setting	The area of timber to be logged by a single spar-tree.
sidehill	A term used by loggers to indicate a hillside or slope.
side-rod	The foreman of the side or unit of trees worked by a single crew of men.
skidding	To draw logs from the stump to the skidway, landing or mill.

skid road	Sometimes incorrectly called Skid Row. Originally referred to the corduroy roads made of logs greased with oil on which timber was skidded out of the bush. The term was picked up in Seattle and Vancouver to signify the waterfront areas where loggers came to spend their wages on alcohol, gaming, and entertainment. These areas were known as skid roads after the occupation of their patrons.
snoose	Powdered chewing tobacco, from the Swedish “snustobac.” In days when it was used widely by loggers it was sometimes referred to as “summer cigarettes” as it was not banned by fire regulation.
spar-tree	A tall standing tree that was at the centre of high-lead logging claim where all the wires tied or ran through blocks to drag logs in from the setting to the loading area. Replicas stand in Campbell River, Nanaimo, and Sooke.
strawline	A small cable or chain which is used in changing the skidding lines from one run of timber to another.
suicide show	A particularly dangerous logging claim.
Svenska	Swede, Swedish.
whistlepunk	The person who operates a steam whistle or horn as a means of communication in the woods. One of the lowest ranking men in the crew.

CHAPTER ONE: BIOGRAPHY

Somewhat contrary to the wishes of her parents, Gertrude Eleanor Mary Gilman married painter and air-survey pilot Stephen Trower in 1929. It was one year later on 25 August, 1930 that Peter Trower was born at St. Leonard's-on-Sea, England, followed a few years later by his brother Chris Trower in 1933. The first few years of Trower's life would prove to be influential regarding his work and would foreshadow his later years. His mother, an award-winning elocutionist who often recited popular poems such as "The Highwayman" by Alfred Noyles and "The Listener" by Walter de la Mare, inspired in Trower a love for poetry and language; his father, a test pilot and a five-year veteran of both the army and the navy, provoked his sense of fantasy and imagination. While these were perhaps the best years of Trower's life, they also brought tragedy with the death of his father in 1935. Following the delivery of a Fairy Battle or Fantome airplane to Moscow in 1935, Stephen Trower died delivering a Fairy Battle to Belgium, blacking out while pulling out of a power-dive, the plane crashing into the Belgian runway. The death of Stephen Trower had a lasting effect on his young son, perhaps resulting in the sense of nostalgia and sorrow that often percolates through his poetry.

Subsequent to the death of Stephen Trower, Trower's mother moved the family to her parent's home in Islip, Oxfordshire, where they resided for the next five years. During this period Trower attended Dragon School in Oxford, taking such subjects as Latin and French, and began to read omnivorously. It was at school that Trower was first

introduced to the works of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, starting a lifelong obsession with science fiction and fantasy novels. It was also during this time that Mary Trower began writing extensively, completing approximately fifty short stories and one novel in manuscript form.

As a result of the outbreak of war in 1939, and in conjunction with the wishes of Stephen Trower to have his two sons educated in Canada, the family enlisted the help of Lady Tweedsmuir, wife¹ of Lord Tweedsmuir or John Buchan, writer and former Governor General of Canada, in emigrating to Canada. A friend of Trower's maternal grandparents, Lady Tweedsmuir was able to secure tickets for them on the evacuee ship, the Duchess of Bedford, setting out in July 1940. Remembered as a dangerous voyage through the U-boat fraught Atlantic, the journey stayed with Trower, inspiring the poem "Atlantic Crossing." The poem recalls "[s]hipping from Liverpool on a gunpowder morning" (*Haunted* 20), and brings the past into the present by precisely capturing the juxtaposition of the innocent children in "the oblivious charades of childhood" (*Haunted* 20) with the worry-laden "adults with dire tense faces" who "whispered nervous along the aisles" (*Haunted* 20). With insight through hindsight Trower relates how "they shut off the engines for precaution" (*Haunted* 21) and "drifted silent for two days" (*Haunted* 21) while "we, the fool children, still laughed / lacking the comprehension for true terror" (*Haunted* 21). The Duchess of Bedford did land safely in Montreal where the family of three crossed Canada by rail.

Initially living in Vancouver with Mary's aunt, the Trower family soon moved to, and settled in, the now defunct town of Port Mellon on Howe Sound where Mary's new

¹ Widowed 11 February, 1940

husband, Trygg Iversen, was superintendent. In 1942 Trower gained a half brother with the birth of Martin Iversen. From 1940-1944 Trower led what he calls “a Huckleberry Finn kind of life” (“Pocket”), attending school in a one room school house and beginning to write what was in his terms “childish doggerel.” At school Trower underwent a rough transition from his experience at the prestigious Dragon School the year before, to a school that didn’t know where to place him because of his advanced educational background, and to a new group of peers, many of whom demonstrated prejudice against the English. Perhaps, as M. Allerdale Grainger suggests in *Woodsmen of the West*, “one’s ‘twang’ and ‘broadness of speech’ and queer way of expressing oneself – the result of an education in England – made one strange and difficult for them [children in this case] to size up” (21). However difficult a time Trower had at school, his life was changed for the better when he met Yvonne Mearns (Klan), the woman who would become his lifelong friend and, later, the love of his life.

At fourteen years of age Trower encountered family crisis once again with the death of his stepfather who drowned on a timber-cruise in 1944. Trower, his mother, his brother Chris, and his half-brother Martin were left in dire circumstances, moving from Vancouver to Gibsons and back to Vancouver in 1947. Due to financial difficulty Trower quit school two months before graduation in 1948 and entered into the workforce, taking on such jobs as working in a seed store, the Vancouver General Hospital laundry, and a tractor parts department. In 1949 Trower’s mother married her third husband, a gardener named Tuenis Nowee. Concurrently, Trower joined his brother Chris working in logging camps and began associating with the zoot-suiters in Vancouver when not logging; together they followed the typical cycle of alternating between spending time in logging

camps and in the city to prevent becoming “bushed” or insane from spending too much time alone in the woods. While Trower didn’t produce any writing in 1948-1949 he continued to read science fiction and fantasy stories voraciously and began some cartooning in his spare time, aspiring to become a professional cartoonist.

In 1951 Mary and her husband moved back to Port Mellon to homestead sixty acres of land left to her by Trygg Iverson. Chris and Peter Trower followed suit while continuing to work in logging camps, often for the same outfit. Yet familial stability would remain elusive for Peter Trower – his brother Chris marrying in 1954 and moving to Kitimat to start a new life, his mother divorcing her philandering husband in the same year. Mary, Peter and Martin continued to live on the property, yet struggled under poor living conditions, living in a couple of shacks with no electricity or hot water. Nevertheless, Trower still found time to devote to art and began to draw cartoons for the local paper and write his first, albeit primitive, logging story, while hiring himself out to various logging camps.

Continuing in this arduous lifestyle, Trower began to work various logging related jobs such as shakecutting, smelting; he also worked in a pulp mill. Working in the shakecutting business in 1955, Trower met Mike Cassin, a hard worker but a mean and violent individual when inebriated. Mary Trower would make Cassin her fourth husband, causing Peter to move out and “seek his fortunes elsewhere” (“Pocket”), never able to find an adequate replacement for his father Stephen who left “only the echoes and shards of himself” behind (Trower *Haunted* 93). Shortly after their marriage Mary sold the Port Mellon property to a gravel company, and moved to Gibsons where Trower would later write much of his poetry in what he refers to as “the shack,” a studio that he built behind

his mother's house on the same property. At the behest of his brother Chris, Trower moved to Kitimat for two years in 1956, simultaneously beginning to use alcohol as a means of coping with his struggles. While in Kitimat Trower worked in a smelter and produced subversive, darkly humorous cartoons and caricatures for various local newspapers, and returned to writing poetry for the first time since his early childhood, perhaps attempting to exorcise some of the demons that plagued him.

Trower's life took a turn for the better in 1958 with the inheritance of ten thousand dollars from an English uncle. The money allowed him to escape the dreary small town life he experienced in Kitimat and spend two years at the Vancouver School of Art in pursuit of his dream to become an artist. Yet, faced with a host of students whose talent seemed to surpass his own, Trower's interest in becoming a professional artist dwindled and he left art school in 1960. His time at art school did, however, furnish him with a foundation on which to build his writing, using the techniques of composition and visual art to "paint in words" the idea, scene, or event of a particular poem. As his interest in art waned, writing began to take on a greater importance in Trower's life with his discovery of authors such as Dylan Thomas, e.e. cummings, and Jack Kerouac; with this new influence began the production of "reams of bad poetry" (Trower "Pocket").

However, Trower's two-year stretch of good luck and self-discovery would not last; he entered in 1960 what he describes as "one of the worst periods of my life" ("Pocket"). With his family life still tumultuous at best (his mother leaving Mike Cassin due to his insufferable behaviour when drinking, his money quickly diminishing, the discovery that his high school sweetheart Yvonne had married, and his alcohol intake increasing), Trower became somewhat of a "street bum, living on beer, handouts and

impractical dreams” (Trower “Pocket”). Forming a sort of poetic apprenticeship with the streets, Trower continued to write furiously, and entered into friendships with other writers and poets such as John Newlove, Milton Acorn, George Miller, and Martin Jensen. Much of Trower’s time was spent scribbling down poetry whenever and wherever he could. In the poem “Wet Testament,” he describes writing “in bars, in bare beatnik rooms, / on hungover buses, in the perfumed parlours of artsy richchicks / and under the grim viaduct” (Trower *Ragged* 61). Life on the streets took its toll on Trower; the “paroxysms of remorse in broken-windowed showdown rooms / the obscene sad truth like a mocking clown / visions of self-destruction oiling across the wallpaper / the sopping nadir of it” (Trower *Ragged* 61) in “Wet Testament” accurately portray the despair in which Trower found himself.

When the magazine *Tish* was launched in 1961 by a group of poets influenced by the American Black Mountain Poets and Professor Warren Tallman of the University of British Columbia – its first editorial collective composed of Frank Davey, George Bowering, Fred Wah, David Dawson, and Jamie Reid – poetry of Trower’s type suddenly became obsolete in the eyes of academia and literary critics. Though any characterisation is somewhat reductive, it was generally felt that the *Tish* poets eschewed poetry rooted in the Romantic, humanist tradition of experience and looked with disfavour toward so called “work poets” such as Trower, Lane, and Acorn.

Simultaneously, the Canadian government was commissioning studies such as The Report of the Royal Commission on Education or the Chant Report in 1960 as well as the MacDonald Study of 1962. Both studies demanded more resources for post secondary education, the demand for higher education vastly outpacing provincial

resources (Barman).² With the increased focus on the value of a post secondary education coupled with the new, “university based” *Tish* poets, it is easy to see the tension created between autodidact poets such as Milton Acorn and Trower who had laboured for a living, their poetry emerging as a result of their experience, and those poets writing poems based in their imagination and in their experiences at university. The antagonism between the two groups is clear in the unpublished poem, “The Ballad of Peter Trower,” given to Trower by Milton Acorn:

Here’s a young, old wage-slave expended
To the edge of ruin in wars
With the green giants of the rain forest;
Drinking bad wine like a boss drinking blood.
“What right has he to rhyme and be a poet?”
False twits of the Bad Mountain scream;
Within whose eruptive range he nests
Damming the lava-flows of their ordure
With words about that awful process – Work!
By which they live... Though it’s not done by them.

In this first stanza of Acorn’s poem both Trower’s biography and Acorn’s propensity for political agitation are powerfully present. Acorn positions Trower biographically through the suggestion that Trower has been pushed, both physically and mentally, to the “edge of ruin” in his logging career, making “war” by logging “the green giants of the rain forest.” Simultaneously, Acorn is positioning Trower in the blue collar sector of the workforce, a position diametrically opposed to upper class society – composed of bosses who drink the “blood” of those in their employ, pushing them to the “edge of ruin.” In the second half of the stanza Acorn moves into a direct attack on the *Tish* group who have either aligned themselves ideologically with, or been heavily influenced by, the Black Mountain poets.

² Added to this was the worry of Soviet supremacy regarding education. This was the result of the launch of the first artificial satellite - the Russian Sputnik in 1957.

Here Acorn positions the *Tish* poets alongside upper class society – who, according to his political ideology, live off the work and labour of others: “that awful process – Work! / By which they live...Though it’s not done by them.” Any remaining doubt about the feeling Acorn is expressing in his defence of Trower against the emerging “language poetry” movement at this time is resolved in the following three lines:

Pete...Do you keep a crop of neckties?
A score or more, to hang the whole lot,
I badly need – lusting to see them rise (Acorn).

In 1963, unable to survive in the city any longer, Trower returned to Gibsons, renewing the familiar cycle of logging life followed by trips to the city. Significantly, the four years from 1964-1969 proved to be a period of relative growth and success for Trower’s writing career. For the first time Trower began writing poems based directly on his experiences in the woods. Concurrently, he met his first literary mentor, Ted Pool, who in 1964 gave Trower the confidence, encouragement, and criticism to pursue his craft even further, and in the same year his poetry earned him money for the first time – five dollars in a *Writer’s Digest* poetry contest.

The “hippie era” saw Trower spending his city time with various musicians and poets in Vancouver, slowly becoming a part of what would later be referred to as the “West Coast [poetry] Scene” of the 1960s and 70s. This era also saw Trower becoming ever more active in producing and publishing poetry. Publishing fifty copies of a mimeographed book of “embarrassingly bad” poems titled *Poems for a Dark Sunday* in 1965 (Trower “Pocket”), Trower was on his way to a career that would produce over thirteen books of poetry and four novels. While *Poems for a Dark Sunday* didn’t achieve

any commercial success, Trower continued submitting poems to various magazines, and, at the suggestion of poet and publisher Bill Bissett, submitted several to *Poetry Australia*. Manifesting an interest in life in British Columbia, *Poetry Australia* accepted some of Trower's poems, resulting in his first mainstream publication and leading to the inclusion of "The Sea Runs Diagonally"³ in the *Borestone Anthology, Best Poems 1967*. Significantly, Mike Cassin died in the same year and, thus, after a brief stint in jail because of marijuana possession, Trower built and moved into a studio on his mother's property – the "shack" where he continued to reside for many years.

Trower's publishing success continued in 1968 when he met artist Jack Wise. Wise's artistry and Trower's poetry resulted in the collaboration *Moving Through the Mystery* in 1969, published by Talonbooks. In *Moving Through the Mystery* Trower relies on literary influences such as Dylan Thomas and Ken Kesey, trying to fit into the 60s scene, perhaps at the expense of his own poetic voice. Yet this book was an important step for Trower because, while it didn't do especially well, it did provoke important introspection. Trower describes how he expected "the world to beat a path to [his] door [though] the world did not oblige" ("Pocket"), a lucid recognition of the fact that he would have to work even harder and develop a unique poetic voice in order to succeed.

The 1970s initiated a period of relative success for Trower. While he did not succeed to the extent that he could sustain himself solely as a poet, he did realize success in terms of publishing and developing a name for himself in the literary community. Trower's interview for Bruno Gerussi on the *Peter Gzowski Show* for CBC Radio in 1971 generated a large response from listeners across Canada and even a few publishing offers.

³ In *Ragged Horizons* (1978)

In that same year Trower left the logging life he had become accustomed to after 22 years, and, at the behest of Howard White, became the associate editor of *Raincoast Chronicles*, a journal which celebrated British Columbian coast life in stories, poetry, articles, and memoirs. Inspired by his recent success, Trower wrote to Al Purdy in 1972 seeking sponsorship for a Canada Council Grant and subsequently initiating a lifelong friendship:

Dear Al,

I met you years ago in Don Macleod's book-store. Maybe you remember. The store's long gone and Don's become a pioneer and things have shifted and changed.

.....
The point of my writing this letter is, I suppose, to ask you if you'd be a sponsor of mine for a grant from the very C.C. [Canada Council], I've just disparaged.

.....
In the Meantime, I enclose my 1969 book, MOVING THROUGH THE MYSTERY [sic.] plus some carbons of recent work to give you some idea of what sort of poetry I write and have written. I hope, on the strength of this, you can see fit to recommend me to the council (Letter to Al Purdy).

Purdy, in response to the book and the poems "Grease for the Wheels of Winter," "Letter to Lowry," and "Atlantic Crossing" among others that were enclosed by Trower, stated that he would "be glad to write [Trower] a supporting letter to CC" (Letter to Trower, 17 May 1972) and in a follow up letter in October of 1972 writes:

Dear Peter:

I wrote an other [sic.] note to CC. after reading your logging poems with which I was very impressed, as I mentioned.

.....
Anyway, about the poems again, if you don't mind me encouraging you, keep it up, for I really think you're onto something.

This brief exchange, inspired by a chance meeting at Don Macleod's bookstore, resulted in Trower gaining not only a friend, but a mentor; Trower later affectionately referred to Purdy as his "Dutch uncle" (Trower, Interview, 25 January 2006).

Trower's reputation in the literary community increased during the 1970s as is evident from the 1973 letter "In Defence of Peter Trower" written by friend and author Patrick Lane.⁴ When he learned that Trower had been declined a grant by the Canada Council, Lane wrote a lengthy letter to the council denouncing their actions and policies, stating that Trower is a "totally unique writer whose poems touch upon the true source of our country's culture and roots" (2) and that the council is so far away from the people that [they] can no longer find them except when [they] look up their numbers on [their] computers in the bureaucratic bowels of [their] cement basement" (3). Lane's appreciation for Trower's poetry is clear, and he considered it to be "some of the best lyric work done in this country in the past fifteen years" (3). Lane carbon copied this letter to writers Alden Nowlan, Al Purdy, Earle Birney, John Newlove, Margaret Atwood, Irving Layton, Dorothy Livesay, Milton Acorn, Raymond Souster, Pat Lowther, Elizabeth Brewster, and Gary Geddes. While much of the documentation is now lost, Milton Acorn supported Trower in accordance with Lane's request, as did Raymond Souster, John Newlove, and Irving Layton.

Particularly responsive to Trower's rejection was Milton James Rhode Acorn who was born in 1923, Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Known for the communist and

⁴ Born in Nelson British Columbia 26 March 1939, Lane, like Trower and Purdy, did not complete any formal education beyond high school in Vernon, British Columbia. Performing a wide variety of jobs from truck driver, to chokerman, to Cat Skinner, Lane is best known for his poetry which he began writing with serious intent in the early 1960s. His *Poems New & Selected* won the 1979 Governor General's Award, and in 1988 his *Selected Poems* garnered him the Canadian Authors Association award for poetry.

socialist ideals that he became devoted to in the 1930s and 40s, Acorn joined the army in 1939 but was discharged in 1943 due to inner ear damage likely suffered as the result of a depth charge. Upon his discharge he was awarded the Defence Medal and the Canadian Volunteer Services Medal with Clasp, as well as the War Medal 1939-1945. Acorn began to devote his attention to writing poetry in the 1950s, but was still affected by the periods of paranoia that had plagued him during the previous three decades, and which was accentuated by the addition of his name to the surveillance list of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. Of significance is Acorn's collaboration with Purdy to publish the literary magazine *Moment* from 1958-1962, and his many collections of poetry, of which *The Island Means Minago* won him the long sought after Governor General's Award in 1975.⁵ In his letter to the Canada Council in support of Trower, Acorn asserts that "Mister Trower is among other things a master of the ballad, a form of poetry modern poets, almost to a man and woman, do not write, not because they won't, because they can't" and condemns the actions of the council with the words "I certainly join, with equal anger, in Pat Lane's protest and demand this injustice you have done be immediately corrected."⁶ Newlove, in his letter, states: "For a long time I have thought that Peter Trower was perhaps the most outstanding example in Canada of a poet of great talent and considerable achievement being totally neglected" (Letter to Trower). Unfortunately, the Council did not reverse their decision, though this fact did not in anyway deter Trower from tenaciously pursuing his craft.

⁵ The collection *I've Tasted My Blood* was short-listed for the Governor General's Award in 1969, but the award was given to his ex-wife Gwendolyn MacEwen and Acorn's rival, George Bowering. Controversy over the motivations behind the decision, and the politics of one of the judges, stirred up protests and other Canadian poets created the Canadian Poets' Award or the People's Poet Award which was presented to Acorn in 1970 at Grossman's Tavern in Toronto for *I've Tasted My Blood*.

⁶ Further evidence of the friendship and professional acclaim between Trower and Acorn can be found in Appendix B in the poem "The Ballad of Peter Trower."

Trower's success in the 1970s continued with the publication of four volumes of poetry – *Between the Sky and the Splinters* (1974), *The Alders and Others* (1976), *Ragged Horizons* (1978), and *Bush Poems* (1978) – as well as myriad articles with such journals and newspapers as *The Coast News*, *Raincoast Chronicles*, *Vancouver Magazine*, *B.C. Outdoors*, *Western Living* and *WestWorld*. For a brief period of time he wrote for *The Coast News* under the pseudonym Montague Royal in order to “get his ego out of the way” (Interview, 25 January 2006). Trower's poetry collections were not only indicative of his success as a poet, but also of his entrance into the mainstream literary community. *Between the Sky and the Splinters* was the inaugural book for Howard White's Harbour Publishing, launching both the press and the poet toward success and garnering praise from fellow writer Dorothy Livesay. In a letter to Trower in 1974 she remarks that she was happy to have “had a hand in pushing Between the Sky...[sic.]” exclaiming about the selections “I like so many! But perhaps especially ‘Cinderwind,’ ‘Cargo Hulks,’ ‘Spar Tree,’ ‘Poem Rower,’ ‘The Animals,’ (wonderful!) ‘In the Gully,’ ‘Goliath Country,’ ‘Grease’ and ‘The Alders’ – the latter is a perfect poem.” Three other volumes of poetry followed *Between the Sky and the Splinters*: *The Alders and Others* brought together a selection of poems selected by Patrick Lane that was presented to Trower on his birthday in 1976; *Ragged Horizons* in 1978 represented the long-standing work and collaboration of Trower, John Newlove, and Al Purdy to put together a national collection with McClelland and Stewart; and *Bush Poems* in 1978, accompanied by the beautiful illustrations of Bus Griffiths, came to represent both the essence of Trower's poetry and of life in west coast logging camps.

Unfortunately the success Trower realized in the seventies would be tempered with grief at the passing of his mother in 1979. Detailing the life of his mother in a three part article in the *Coast News* newspaper, titled “A Very Special Little Lady”⁷ proved to be cathartic for Trower, and he would later state that while “it was traumatic and a great loss...it probably helped me to grow up at long last” (“Pocket”). On 19 April 1979, two days after the death of his mother, Trower writes in his daily journal that “She was the dearest little lady in the world and I will never let her memory die” (Trower, “Journal”). Parallel to the cyclical nature of logging, the cycle of ups and downs in Trower’s life would come full circle later that year when Trower became reacquainted with the newly separated Yvonne (Mearns) Klan and embarked on what would be the “most rewarding relationship of [his] life” (Trower “Pocket”). In the fall of 1982 Trower and Klan, with the help of an explorations grant, embarked on a journey to trace the life of Herbert Emerson Wilson. Spurred on by the remembrance of meeting Wilson at the now defunct Wilson’s Arcade of Mysteries, then at 985 Granville Street in Vancouver where such gruesome items as a hangman’s rope, a wax replica of Al Capone, and grotesque paintings of torture and murder were housed, Trower and Klan set off to trace Wilson’s path through Canada and the United States. Wilson, born in 1881 in Wyoming, Ontario to extremely religious parents, entered the ministry to become a preacher. At age thirty-five, Wilson left the church, quickly becoming a crime lord and master thief, garnering him the aliases “King of the Safecrackers” and “Holy Herb.” Reportedly, Wilson and his crew set off on a crime spree moving through Chicago, Kansas City, Detroit and California, stealing close to \$16 million dollars. Trower and Klan, eager to examine the

⁷ *Coast News* 24 April 1979; 1 May 1979; 8 May 1979.

life of such an enigmatic figure, and anxious to discover the truth of Wilson's claim to be the brother of the notorious Edward Arthur Wilson or Brother Twelve,⁸ tracked Wilson's life from newspaper archives in Los Angeles to the Mojave Desert, to Dodge City, to San Quentin where Wilson spent twelve years, and back to Canada where he spent six years in Kingston and Prince Albert penitentiaries. The chronicle of Trower and Klan's journey would later inform the poem "The Legend of Holy Herb" (*Unmarked Doorways*) and a chronological series of poems in *A Ship Called Destiny*.

Continuing prolifically to write articles and publish poetry, Trower, through Harbour Publishing, produced *Goosequill Snags* in 1982, his sixth book of poetry. Moving away from a sole focus on woods poems, *Goosequill Snags* highlights Trower's experiences across British Columbia in such poems as "Hang-Gliders Over Grouse Mountain" and "Harrison Hot Springs Nocturne." A series of five poems – "Yard," "Lights Out," "Wasted Summer Sunlight," "Counting House Blue," "My Cell Has Many Doors" – appearing under the heading "Oakalla Suite" detail Trower's brief stint in Burnaby's Oakalla Prison Farm, the site of 44 executions by hanging from 1919 until the death penalty was abolished in 1959. Oakalla was renamed the Lower Mainland Regional Correctional Centre in 1970; it closed on 30 June, 1991.

In 1985 Alan Twigg and Tom Shandel collaborated to create a CBC documentary about Trower titled *Peter Trower: The Men There Were Then*. This was quickly followed by Trower's seventh book of poetry, *The Slidingback Hills*, in 1986. Continuing in his role of mentor to Trower, Al Purdy, in the introduction to *The Slidingback Hills*, dubs Trower the "poet laureate of this mountain kingdom" (5), describing Trower's unique

⁸ A claim that has proven to be false.

ability to unite “nostalgia and the present tense in very nearly the same sentence” (6), and expressing his appreciation of Trower’s poetic range: “Nor is he [Trower] limited in métier or locale even though British Columbia lives and breathes in nearly all of his writing” (6). Purdy’s accolades continue as he describes how “in these poems Peter Trower unrolls the blue sea like a rug and untangles the mean streets of Vancouver; he unwrinkles the mountains sideways so they run east and west like a sheet of uncrumpled paper. And there is room for all of us” (7), thereby further cementing Trower’s place in the literary community. Trower ended the decade much as he began it; he continued to produce articles for numerous journals, magazines, and newspapers, and Harbour Publishing released another volume of his poetry in 1989 titled *Unmarked Doorways*.

In the 1990s Trower embarked on an entirely different path with the publication of his first novel, *Grogan’s Café*, in 1993. Published in the same year in which Trower played himself in CBC’s *The Diary of Evelyn Lau*, *Grogan’s Café* is the first instalment of what would become known as the Terry Belshaw Trilogy. Inspired by Trower’s experiences in the cities and woods of British Columbia’s West Coast, *Grogan’s Café* details the story of Terry Belshaw as he moves between the harsh terrain of the woods and the dismal setting of Davie Grogan’s café. Concurrent with these two projects, Trower co-authored *Rough and Ready Times* with Ellen Frith in 1993, a book which chronicled the history of the now defunct town and pulp mill of Port Mellon, British Columbia. The success of the nineties continued for Trower with the publication of his ninth book of poetry *Where Roads Lead* in 1994, and the second instalment of the Terry Belshaw Trilogy, *Dead Man’s Ticket*, in 1996.

In 1997 Trower published *Hitting the Bricks: Urban Jazz Poems*, his first volume published with Ekstasis Editions. Again moving away from a focus on logging and the woods of British Columbia, *Hitting the Bricks* explores the hotels, bars and night time haunts of Vancouver. In “Alcazar Requiem” [sic.] Trower reminisces about the hotel he frequented with authors such as Milton Acorn, and Al Purdy. Trower elegantly unites the remembered joy of the times spent at the Alcazar with the nostalgia and loss of fading memories:

The bar where we tiddled and quipped
safe in our roles and phases
is a circus of empty chairs –
the clowns are gone with a vanishing giggle (74)

Significantly, *Hitting the Bricks* also contains the poem “A Voice from the Edge” which details a phone call Trower had with Pat Lowther shortly before her death in 1975.⁹

While Trower and Pat Lowther never met in person, they frequently spoke on the telephone, often discussing their poetry. In “A Voice from the Edge” Trower describes the telephone conversation they had the day she disappeared:

I will never forget your voice
on that last day of your days
it ghosted over the phone like audible darkness
.....
And I didn't know didn't know
that yours was a voice from the edge

⁹ Born Patricia Louise Tinmuth in 1935, Pat Lowther grew up in North Vancouver, British Columbia. She married Bill Dompousse in 1953, and they had two children, Katherine and Alan, before separating in 1957. In 1963 she married Roy Armstrong Lowther, a public school teacher and aspiring writer, with whom she had two daughters, Beth and Christine. With the support of writers such as Patrick Lane and Dorothy Livesay, Pat Lowther published her first collection of poems in 1968 titled *This Difficult Flowring* with Very Stone House, a small Vancouver press founded by Patrick Lane, Seymour Mayne, Bill Bisset, and Jim Brown. Several books of poetry later, Lowther was teaching at the University of British Columbia and had been elected co-chair of the Canadian League of Poets. Tragically, Pat Lowther was murdered by her husband in 1975, her body found on October 15 1975 at Furry Creek, British Columbia. Roy Lowther was convicted of her murder in June of 1977 and died in prison in 1985.

that a man corrupted by jealousy
stood at the door of your life with his hand on the hammer (68).

Trower, scheduled to perform a poetry reading with Lowther, Patrick Lane, and David Day at the Ironworker's hall in Vancouver, remarks in a letter to Al Purdy in 1985 on the subject "...but, of course she never made it." In his daily journal Trower comments on the last time they spoke on the phone, the night before the reading, remarking on 9 October that the "last time I phoned her, she sounded close to the edge" and on 16 October how he "can't forget how terrified her voice sounded on the phone that last time." Trower's memory of Lowther's voice clearly informs his later poem on the subject; his words reflect how much this event haunted and affected him thereafter.

Continuing his relationship with Ekstasis Editions, Trower published *Chainsaws in the Cathedral: Collected Woods Poems* in 1999. The poems, collected at the behest of Al Purdy – who also suggested the title –, represent Trower's "entire output of publishable logging poems" (*Chainsaws* 9) prior to 1999. In the author's foreword Trower states that this collection is designed to represent a "well rounded picture of what it was like to be a westcoast logger in the forties, fifties, sixties and seventies" (9). Though he was battling lung cancer at the time, Purdy still blessed *Chainsaws in the Cathedral* with an introduction and an epigraph which reads: "So am I prejudiced when writing about Peter Trower? Of course I am. But then his writings were the first thing I ever knew about him. I'm glad to be prejudiced" (12).¹⁰ Purdy died Friday, 21 April 2000, soon after *Chainsaws in the Cathedral* was published. The long friendship that Trower and Purdy shared is passionately described in the poem "Remembering Al, A

¹⁰ See the aforementioned letter detailing their first meeting and communication.

Tribute to Al Purdy” in the collection *There are Many Ways*.¹¹ The eighth stanza of “Remembering Al” beautifully describes the last meeting between the two friends, and illustrates the importance that poetry played in their lives:

Our last meeting – Yvonne and I dropping in
to give you a copy of *Chainsaws in the Cathedral*
the book you had always been after me to put together –
for which you had both coined the title
and written the great introduction –
you thin and frail but still in good spirits, looking pleased
urging me, as always to keep on writing –
me thinking I was glad to be able to give it to you
while you were still around –
it was as though we had completed a project
embarked upon long ago (119)

Though the new millennium began with a time of mourning, it also brought with it further success for Trower as well as significant critical reception and recognition. In 2000 Trower published the third and final instalment of the Terry Belshaw Trilogy, *The Judas Hills*. Concurrently, Trower produced another collection of poems in 2000 with Ekstasis Editions called *A Ship called Destiny, Yvonne's Book*. The importance of this work in the corpus of Trower's writings is best summed up in the words of Trower himself in his introduction:

This book is a tribute to my long-time partner, best friend and soul-mate, Yvonne Klan. Many of the poems involve journeys both physical and emotional, that I would undoubtedly never have taken without her unstinting encouragement, inspiration and love. She has been my muse in a very real sense. (7)

In fact, the series of poems in the volume from “Big Bang Still Echoing” to “We Measure the Miles in Muffets” is a chronological account of the aforementioned journey to track down information about Herbert Emerson Wilson – King of the Safecrackers – in 1982.

¹¹ See Appendix A.

From this same time period and written in the same spirit is the poem “The quest for Chala-oo-chick,” which, though absent from *A Ship Called Destiny*,¹² also chronicles the experiences of Trower and Klan as they explored and researched a forgotten fur trading post at the “confluence of the Nechako and Chilako rivers” that pre-dated Prince George, in Trower’s terms a “historic Eldorado” (Trower, Interview).

In 2002 Trower received the Terasen Lifetime Achievement Award for an outstanding literary career in British Columbia. In the same year Trower returned to a project that had eluded him for many years and published *There Are Many Ways*, teaming up once again with artist Jack Wise for this sequel of sorts to the 1969 collection *Moving Through the Mystery*.¹³ Wise died in 1996, unable to see his art in *There Are Many Ways*, the collection of poetry that Trower called “the right vehicle for Jack’s masterful drawings” (*There Are Many Ways* 7).

2003 brought further success to Trower with the purchase of his collected letters, journals and other papers by Simon Fraser University Library. Facilitated by Dr. Geoffrey Madoc-Jones of Simon Fraser University, a long time friend of Trower’s, the acquisition allowed Trower the freedom to pursue his fascination with music. While the musical cadences of Trower’s poetry are readily apparent to even the casual reader, the release of the CD *Sidewalks and Sidehills* in 2003, a series of Trower’s poems read to a

¹² Published in *British Columbia History* Volume 38, 2, 2005.

¹³ Jack Marlowe Wise was born on 27 April, 1928 in Centerville, Iowa. Meeting renowned artist Toni Onley in Mexico between the years 1958–1961, Wise learned about British Columbia and immigrated there in 1963. Known as an artist, poet and teacher, Wise is best remembered for his calligraphy, the fusion of East and West in his artwork, his association with the West Coast Surrealists or Hermetics, and his mandalas – colourful circular designs of Hindu and Buddhist origin that embody Buddhist cosmology and symbolize the totality of existence. Wise’s paintings were often inspired by the landscape of British Columbia, the Gulf Islands and the Straight of Juan de Fuca in particular. His artwork can be found in the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria, British Columbia.

jazz back beat, confirms the integration of music in Trower's poems as an essential component of his poetic. Trower's success with reading and singing his poetry to music continued with the release of *Kisses in the Whiskey* in 2004. He frequently performs for a live audience at the Railway Club, one of Vancouver's best-loved venues for live music.

Sadly, just as Trower's success was reaching its pinnacle, his soul-mate and partner, Yvonne Mearns Klan, died on 4 October 2004 as a result of cancer; she is survived by her daughters Sandra and Teresa, and her grandchildren, Julian and Celeste. Born in 1930 at a logging camp near Victoria, Yvonne is rumoured to have been delivered by her father who cut the umbilical cord while her 17-year-old mother read him instructions from a St. John Ambulance handbook. Like Trower, Klan grew up listening to the ballads of Robert Swanson, recited to her in the logging bunkhouses of her youth. She is the author of numerous historical articles and made contributions to the *Encyclopaedia of British Columbia*. Klan is best remembered for her determined and expert research abilities as well as *The Old Red Shirt*, *Pioneer Poets of British Columbia*, a composite of poems, biographical sketches, and historical interludes detailing the lives and works of British Columbia's first poets.

Also in 2004 came the release of *Haunted Hills & Hanging Valleys, Selected Poems 1969-2004*, a representative collection of Trower's poetry containing ninety six of his best poems. Carmine Starnino, writing for *Books in Canada*, remarks that in *Haunted Hills and Hanging Valleys* "the poems do exactly what they need to: they take a big decisive, reputation defining leap into the contemporary scene..." (34). Indeed, this volume of poetry propelled Trower toward one of his most significant achievements, the reception of the Jack Chalmers Poetry Award from the Canadian Authors Association in

2005. Currently, Trower spends his time moving between the place he shared with Klan, a suite that overlooks Lonsdale Quay in Vancouver, and his home in Gibsons. His current activities include a new collection of previously unpublished poems, a book detailing his experiences with Klan in tracking Herbert Emerson Wilson, and a renewed focus on art and cartooning.

CHAPTER TWO: LOGGING, WORKING CLASS CONCERNS & PETER TROWER

Like the coherence of a text, the structural coherence of life is defined as a relation between the whole and the parts. Every part expresses something of the whole of life-i.e., has significance for the whole-just as its own significance is determined by the whole. It is the old hermeneutical principle of textual interpretation, and it applies to the coherence of life insofar as life presupposes a unity of meaning that is expressed in all its parts.

– Hans-Georg Gadamer (*Truth and Method* 218-19)

In *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (1983) Edward Said suggests that it is generally accepted that “literature and the humanities exist within culture, that the culture is ennobled and validated by them, and yet that in the version of culture inculcated by professional humanists and literary critics, the approved practice of high culture is marginal to the serious political concerns of society” (1). In other words, literature and the humanities are embedded in, are overseen by, and are produced by, culture. Culture, according to Said is “the environment, process, and hegemony in which individuals (in their private circumstances) and their works are embedded, as well as overseen at the top by a superstructure and at the base by a whole series of methodological attitudes” (8).¹⁴ Yet “the approved practice of high culture,” for example literary theory and analysis, is somehow “marginal” to, or separate from culture; it often fails to take the “serious political concerns of society” into account. While literature is embedded in and produced

¹⁴ Henceforth this is the definition of culture that will operate in this text.

by culture, literary analysis often fails to consider the crises and tensions that caused the work to be produced to begin with, and that are, therefore, present in it. To remedy this Said suggests the position that “texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted” (4). This position then, “these realities” (5), should be taken into account by criticism and by the critical consciousness.

Adopting the position of Edward Said is especially productive in examining the work of Peter Trower because of his professed concern for working class life and events, because of the immediacy of working class themes and west coast life present in his poems, and because of the four decade span of his work.¹⁵ Trower’s work directly addresses a particular social world and historical time period. While I do not propose to perform an examination of Trower’s work in the full magnitude of Said’s position, I do suggest that a thorough examination of Trower’s work as a cultural event reveals that it is impressed and shaded with, perhaps informed with, the thoughts, feelings, history, and attitudes of a particular social group within a particular historical time period, reflecting their economic and social life. The first step in examining Trower’s work as a cultural event is, therefore, to look at the social world and historical moments that led to its production and the first social group that Trower is located in. The logical starting point,

¹⁵ Said’s contrapuntal criticism is primarily used by literary critics to explore the tensions between colonial and postcolonial writing in order to disrupt the traditionally univocal way of interpreting texts, and instead present a polyphonic or contrapuntal way of reading a text. Said’s use of contrapuntal criticism or counterpoint, the harmonious juxtaposition of melodies or voices, is predominantly used as a metaphor for cross-cultural exchange and negotiation in order to analyse the overlapping of colonial and postcolonial “melodies” or voices in a text, yet counterpoint can easily be applied to the polyphonic nature of, or “melodies” in, any text as it intersects with culture – in Trower’s case how he and his work intersect with British, Canadian, and British Columbian, culture of the 20th century.

then, would be Trower's birth at St. Leonard's-on-Sea, England, 1930 and his immigration to Canada ten years later. Yet, because the subject of Trower's work as it expresses elements of nineteenth century British culture will be expanded on in later chapters, this chapter will be limited to Trower's time in Canada. In examining Trower's work as a cultural event we find on one hand expressions of the economic and social realities, tensions, and crises present in British Columbia and Canada; on the other hand we find expressions of the major historical poetry movements in Canada, of the history of poetry in British Columbia, and of west coast life in British Columbia. As mentioned above, the focus of Trower's work concerns the working class segment of society – logging life in particular – and thus, I will limit this chapter to analysis of the resource economy of Canada and British Columbia.

The Resource Economy

The economy of Canada, British Columbia in particular, has always been based to some extent – if not predominantly – on natural resources. From sealing and fur trading to logging and agriculture, natural resources have driven the BC economy, aided in the formation of the province, and contributed in no small part to the physical and psychological development of the individual inhabitants of the province. From 1872-1932 furs and gold began to be replaced by industries such as fishing, mining, agriculture and forestry. With the development of the Great Northern Railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the transpacific steamship in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, the province of British Columbia was opened up to the development of these new resources and to a shift of population into urban areas. In 1914 Chief Forster H.R.

MacMillan stated that logging and logging related manufacturing “employs more labour, distributes more money, consumes more supplies [and] produces more wealth and public revenue than any other” industry (Johnston 220). It isn’t surprising that this was the case considering that “45 percent of the land [in BC] was high-value virgin forest; only about 8 percent of [which] had been logged off by the end of the First World War” (Johnston 220). Yet the colossal success of the logging industry could not hide the terrible working conditions that supported it. While initially the “physical carnage within the forest industry was obscured by the absence of any protective labour legislation” (Johnston 224), the introduction of state compensation for injury or loss of life in 1918 made it clear that logging was “the most costly of our industries from an accident point of view” (in Johnston 224).¹⁶ Thus, almost from its inception as an industry logging was bifurcated into those who laboured under potentially mortal circumstances and those who profited from such circumstances – a tension between working class individuals and their employers that would last well into the twentieth century. In spite of the economic recession precipitated by the 1929 stock market crash, logging remained one of the mainstays of the BC economy and again underwent massive expansion with the close of the Second World War. A combination of factors including individuals whose accumulated savings could now be spent, increased Federal pressure for economic expansion, and the post war rebuilding of Europe, resulted in Canada becoming the sixth largest trading nation in the world, with forestry undergoing the largest expansion of all industries in the province of British Columbia.

¹⁶ The British Columbia Workmen’s Compensation Board, Fifteenth Annual Report (1931)

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s logging was such an alluring market for labour that many would leave industries such as farming, and travel west to enter the logging camps. The west coast logging camps also had a romantic allure to them similar to the American “Wild West.” In hindsight Trower stated that “Vancouver was the Dodge City of British Columbia” (Interview); loggers would come down from the camps like they were riding into an old western town to blow their money on gambling and booze. Martin Allerdale Grainger relates in *Woodsmen of the West*, often described as the first serious novel set in British Columbia, how “the first thing a fellow needs when he hits Vancouver is a clean-up: haircut, shave, and perhaps a bath” (15) and how “the first two days in town a man will get good-and-drunk. That is all right, as any doctor will tell you; that it is good for a fellow after hard days and weeks of work in the woods” (15). Logging, implying romance, adventure, and money, would have seemed to be the perfect job for a young man at that time. Hence it is easy to see why Trower when quit school due to financial difficulty he shortly after became a logger. The cultural conditions of the logging industry leading up to and including the post World War Two era produced in Trower the perfect individual to describe the logging world as it unfolded around him, and to reach into the past to bring the history of logging through to the present; this he did with great success. Like the eponymous character in the poem “Granddaddy Tough,” Trower can be said to have the “history of logging / in his muscles” (24), and in his mind “the cold-decked memories / lie eager for the telling” (24), and in the case of Trower we can take this both literally and figuratively. Having worked in the logging industry for twenty two years Trower’s muscles really did contain a history of logging from the time he began in 1949 when he was nineteen, to the full mechanization of the industry years

later. Figuratively speaking, however, Trower's muscles are his poems – working to express the historical realities of the logging industry in British Columbia as well as the social and personal realities of those who performed its physical labour.

“A Testament of Hills,” one of Trower's longest poems, could aptly be called a testament of logging, serving as an excellent overview of the historical and social realities of the logging industry. The poem presents its readers with a glimpse into the nexus of feelings and attitudes felt by those in the industry, including feelings of misery, futility, pride, honour, bravado, and mysticism, which are also explored individually in Trower's other poems. Furthermore, “A Testament of Hills” provides a snapshot of the historical and economic reality of both the success and danger inherent in the industry as well as the resulting consequences of these qualities.

Incorporating elements of the ballad form – such as the presence of a balladeer and the use of a refrain – with the lyric into “A Testament of Hills,” Trower expresses the dualistic nature of logging as an industry that is one of destruction, hardship and transgression, yet simultaneously one of honour, pride and success. The opening stanza of “A Testament of Hills” immediately establishes the reader's relationship to the poem as well as the mood, initiating a pattern that holds for the remainder of the poem:

It was pulling strawline
up some endofnowhere hill
in the rain
with the whole world tied to the end –
reefing like a lunatic
on a piece of steel string
with no hand to swat the horseflies (28)

The past progressive tense “was pulling” in the first line instantly positions the reader at a distance from the scene of the poem; yet it also positions the reader alongside the speaker of the poem, the balladeer, through the invocation of the oral nature of the traditional ballad form as evoked throughout the poem by the refrain “It was.” Consequently, the reader is divided to enable the incorporation of a dual perspective. The reader is fractured a second time to incorporate a third position with the placement of the second verb in the stanza. Here the past progressive form established with “was pulling,” indicating an action that occurred in the past, is replaced with the present participle “reefing”; the auxiliary verb “was” has been omitted, a pattern repeated throughout the poem. The result of this omission is that the stand alone verb “reefing” now implies the present progressive, or that the action is now occurring in the present – the reader’s subject position enters into a dialogue with the grammar of the poem and now occupies a position on the same level as the action. Hence, the reader of this poem incorporates three positions at three hierarchical distances from the poem, the first and most distant is that of an alienated or distanced observer, the second is that of an intimate of the balladeer yet one still at a distance from the action of the poem, and the third is one which occupies the same level as the action of the poem. The overall result of this trifurcation of the reader is that it allows both firsthand experience of the reality of the poem’s action as well as critical reflection from varying distances.

The scene itself establishes the tone and mood of the poem as one of misery, futility, and transgression, yet also one of honour and pride. Trower relies on an assumed lack of knowledge regarding logging terminology to make the phrase “pulling strawline / up some endofnowhere hill” sound deceptively easy; the word “straw” plays with the

implications of the word straw as something which is soft and weak. The word “line” too, sounds deceptively simple, suggesting weakness or fineness. In fact, a strawline is a cable used to change skidding lines from one run to another. In logging, cables or chains were used to “skid logs” or draw them from the stump to the skidway, landing or mill; the strawline, then, would be used to take these cables or chains to the next section of logs. Contrary to the suggestiveness of the words “straw” and “line” to the unlearned ear, pulling a strawline is an arduous task

Compounding the difficulty of the task is the sense of redundancy or futility involved, expressed by the adjective “endofnowhere” in describing the hill. The word “nowhere” itself is not a physical place, and is thus a transgression of the physical boundaries of space and time. More than not being a physical place, however, “nowhere” is an absence of place, an absolute absence of space and time. Yet the adjective “endofnowhere” indicates a place that isn’t just “nowhere,” but is somewhere, in fact, a location that is *precisely at the end* of “nowhere.” Logically the “end of nowhere” is literally the place where “nowhere ends” and thus is indicative of some unknown physical or metaphysical endpoint. At the same time the “endofnowhere” is a place where the possibilities of both physical and imaginative existence have been exhausted. The persona¹⁷ in the poem, then, is in a place that is worse than nowhere, a place unknown and unrealized, a place where he must go in order to perform such as task. The image of an individual pulling a strawline through to the end of nowhere, then, is suggestive of absolute futility and misery. Yet, the misery of the persona in the poem is compounded

¹⁷ The reason for the term “persona” here is to indicate a separation between the individual who is relating the events in the poem, and the person experiencing the events in the poem. Though it may be likely that these individuals are one and the same, the absence of the first person pronoun in the poem precludes such a presumption.

yet further with the line “in the rain.” Though the line could be read as an iamb followed by a monosyllabic foot, it can also be seen as a spondee followed by a monosyllabic foot, and thus indicative of the quick hard patter of the striking rain, tacked on to the preceding line like a sarcastic, bitter afterthought. The reader of the poem is, as a result of his fractured perspective, able to feel the sense of futility and misery in this stanza by being a part of the action and an intimate of the balladeer, yet is also able to critically reflect on logging as an industry, and realize the physical havoc it must have wreaked on the human body.

Though the words “reefing” and “lunatic,” as well as the annoyance the narrator feels toward the presence of horseflies, contribute to the sense of misery and futility generated by the first stanza, the line “with the whole world tied to the end –” serves a dual purpose in the stanza and sets up a pattern for the rest of the poem. On first reading, this line seems to do no more than reinforce the misery and futility of the scene, yet a closer examination reveals that the line can be read as a masculine image of honour and pride. The pause indicated by the hyphen at the end of the line draws attention to and emphasizes the fact that the speaker truly feels as though he is pulling the world behind him. The result is that the persona in the poem is elevated from logger to mythic hero, if only imaginatively. The persona of the poem is performing the arduous task of pulling a strawline up an “endofnowhere” hill in the rain, but the fact that he is able to transgress beyond the boundaries of the physical and the imaginary with the whole world tied to the end enables him to draw a comparison with mythical heroes such as Atlas, and thus, he can take pride in his ability, and reef like a lunatic in the rapture of his strength, endurance, and success. The reader too, drawn into the action by the present participle, is

able to feel the honour and pride associated with the ability to perform such a feat, and join in the exhilaration created by individual human accomplishment.

Hence, even in the first stanza of “A Testament of Hills” Trower is able to express the social and historical reality of working in the logging industry. He is able to capture the historical hardship and arduous nature of the work as well as the mixed feelings of misery, futility, honour and pride associated with the endurance, strength, and perseverance required performing such work with success. Yet we need not rely on a single stanza for evidence of this. The historical reality of the physical carnage the industry wreaked on its workers as stated above is more overtly expressed by the fourth and tenth stanzas:

It was a block breaking
with a spar-tree half raised –
the tree smashing back into the swamp –
part of the block whistling by your head
like angry shrapnel
and in your mouth, the rusty taste of death
for the first time (28)

The harsh stresses in the compound phrases of “block breaking,” “tree shrapnel,” “block whistling,” and “rusty taste,” suggest a chaotic, war-like atmosphere where events are unfolding fast and hard; the synaesthetic “taste of death” both increases the richness of the text and attempts to harmonize death with experience in the camps by unifying it with the mundane, daily activity of eating.

It was working three suicide shows
in a row
too broke or stupid to quit –
logs and boulders crashing down on you
through blinding and clammy fog –
an uprooted stump chasing you one day
and nearly catching you (30)

The fact that “suicide shows,” or particularly dangerous logging claims, are so named in the jargon of loggers is itself an indication of the day in and day out peril that loggers faced, often being “chased” by stumps that abruptly and dangerously break free of the earth while being removed. By describing the constant danger and peril experienced by those who laboured in the logging industry, Trower’s poem exposes the historical fact that in the early twentieth century the British Columbian and Canadian governments lacked any interest in the safety and protection of loggers. Though “A Testament of Hills” never directly confronts the lack of government control and regulation in the logging industry, the vivid description of the danger and chaos of the camps in conjunction with the utter absence of authority and regulation is “testament” alone. Furthermore, the poem is vaguely suggestive of class division and distinction in British Columbia via its focus on the propensity for injury and loss of life, almost as if the lives consumed by the industry were seen as no more than fodder for the industry.

The only reason given as to why this particular social group endures these conditions is the degrading statement that loggers are “too broke or stupid to quit –.” Yet clearly this assertion is a simplification and a stereotype, perhaps even an attempt at modesty. A close look at the poetic device that manifests itself most immediately to both the eye and the ear – the refrain “It was” – indicates several alternate possibilities. The refrain functions foremost as a device to imply the ballad form, yet it also serves to unite the poem, to bring together all the elements of the logging experience through repetition. In fact, the refrain “It was” serves initially to indicate the survival of the balladeer, its presence indicating that the story is still being told. Secondly, in each of the twenty one stanzas, the refrain introduces an assertion, a statement about logging, which is

subsequently described and delimited. A list of each stanza's first line reveals this pattern:

1. It was pulling strawline
2. It was Friday Afternoons
3. It was riding those doodlebug planes
4. It was a block breaking
5. It was trying to unhook floating logs
6. It was sometimes the inviting eyes
7. It was the cool-eyed junkies
8. It was the wattled faces
9. And it was deadly dull
10. It was working three suicide shows
11. It was the skidroad hiring halls
12. It was letting the last guyline go
13. It was the legendary characters
14. It was walking to the warf
15. And it was the unreal early shifts
16. It was fighting fire –
17. It was evil days of high wind and hail
18. It was the ubiquitous cookshack
19. It was the beer-parlour bull sessions
20. It was three glum months
21. And it was the last camp

Each refrain is a statement “flung down upon the table” as it were about life as a logger, each statement part of a chronicle, overview or “testament” about logging. The repetition of the refrain is in this way successful in unifying the poem under the umbrella of the term “testament.”

However, of even more significance is the fact that Trower, by making each refrain a descriptive statement that declares something about logging life, and by making the majority of these declarations claims about danger, misery, futility, and other negative aspects about logging, calls attention to and questions the very fact of this negativity. One reason for such a focus is evidently to express the social and historical reality of logging, yet this could have been accomplished with less excess. Rather than assume Trower is implying that loggers as a group revel in the misery and negativity expressed in the poem, I suggest that in addition to unifying the poem, the repetition in the refrain serves to purge or “discharge emotion that could not be exhausted in one saying” (Coleridge in Preminger, “Ballad”). The discharge of emotion in each refrain is the prideful and masculine “throwing down” of honourable accomplishments and trials of endurance. The

refrain in this sense is akin to a list or chronicle of the dangerous yet heroic feats, abilities, and endurances of a logger: “breaking blocks,” “fighting fires,” and “working suicide shows.” Thus, the statement “too broke or stupid to quit –” becomes a modest foil to the actual reason that loggers do what they do. The refrain is the “throwing down” of a prideful and honourable challenge: who can do the things listed here and survive? The answer of course is loggers. “A Testament of Hills” doesn’t just capture the historical and social reality of the danger and misery experienced by loggers, it also expresses the feelings and attitudes of intense pride, honour, and bravado that result from an immense sense of accomplishment at being able to perform under such conditions.

The success of the logging industry in the twentieth century expressed by “A Testament of Hills” furthers the preceding conclusion. While Trower’s poem never overtly describes the success of the industry, if it is read as a textual event that reflects a particular historical and social reality, then it makes such success quite clear, as will be shown. There are three specific instances in the poem that work to indicate the overwhelming success of the industry:

It was trying to unhook floating logs
with greenhorn fingers (V 29)
.....
It was the cool-eyed logger junkies
kicking heroin habits in sullen bunkhouses (VII 29)
.....
It was the skidroad hiring halls
with their seedy wheedling mancatchers –
their beckoning job-listing blackboards (XI 30)

Though the first two quotations occur first in the poem, they actually follow logically from the third. In the logging boom of the nineteenth century the demand for labour was so intense as a result of the industry’s success that the “skidroad hiring halls” would hire

indiscriminately, thus there would be experienced loggers working in the same camp alongside “greenhorns,” or inexperienced individuals, and with drug addicted “cool-eyed logger junkies.” The “cool-eyed logger junkies” are also suggestive of the common practice of law enforcement at the time to give criminals a “walk” or “float” which meant that they would be let go on the condition that they would remain away from Vancouver for the period of one year. Needing to move away from Vancouver, these “junkies” found a natural home in the woods with logging companies and their indiscriminate hiring practices.

With such a mix of individuals in the camp, both physical and linguistic violence became important tools for survival. Physically, loggers had to be tough individuals to survive the physical ordeal of both the bush and the fighting that occurred in the camps. Linguistically, words became a weapon of sorts; the more feats of danger and bravery that loggers could declare as their own, and the coarser the language they used, the higher their social status would be elevated. Thus, to return to the quotation “too broke or stupid to quit –,” it is again apparent that it is a modest foil to the rough declarations of the refrain in “A Testament of Hills” which serve the additional function of signifying the elevation of the loggers’ character through language: using the concepts of honour, pride and courage as tools for survival. In this way conflict could often be diffused before it began.

As an overview of logging, “A Testament of Hills” accomplishes its purpose. It beautifully and succinctly expresses the danger and success of the industry while also introducing its readers to the complex feelings and attitudes of those working in the

industry. However, the poem can not serve as a picture for the whole of the logging industry; it is Trower's other poems that flesh out this industry, focusing in on its qualities and consequences, giving readers a more complete idea of the world Trower inhabited. A case in point is Trower's treatment of mythology. While "A Testament of Hills" alludes to a mythology present in logging, it does not do justice to this topic. A brief look at Trower's use of the ballad form is instrumental in examining the mythology needed and created by loggers, and which is subsequently perpetuated by Trower's poetry.

While Trower's free verse ballads such as "A Testament of Hills" and "The Last Handfallers" both adhere to the basic tenets of the ballad – focus on a single crucial episode with action directed toward catastrophe, action which is shown rather than told, ordinary language, and an impersonal tone –, they diverge in terms of meter and content. Regarding content these poems often rely on elements of the lyric; in particular they seem to fall under the category of the Lyric of Emotion or Feeling of the mysticism type.¹⁸ Another way of stating this is that Trower's ballads are written with elements of the Romance Mode in mind. Specifically, the mysticism lyric of Emotion or Feeling is used as a substitute for Greek myths, and one of the primary characteristics of writing in the Romance Mode is that it in some way seeks to restore gods to a de-mythologized landscape or wasteland. Furthermore, typical of other mythologies, the mythology surrounding the world of logging serves to explain "why the world is as it is, [why] things happen the way they do and provid[e] a rationale for social customs and observances" (Abrams 170).

¹⁸ See "lyric" in Preminger.

The concept of mythology¹⁹ plays an important role in Trower's poetry. On one level, it serves to express the social need that loggers felt for a mythology and on another it creates and preserves the mythology already created. Spending vast amounts of time in what amounted to a perilous man-made wasteland, aptly described in "Skookumchuck" as "the ruined watersheds and wrung slopes / where new roads snake past the snowline / and the black amputated claws / of charred stumps / grip dirt in the scarcountry" (Trower *Haunted* 73), and continually in danger of becoming "bushed" or insane from spending too much time in the woods, loggers naturally sought to create a mythology of heroic figures. These icons of strength, endurance and tenacity functioned as proof to loggers that the human could triumph both physically and emotionally over the land, filled the need for inspiration and faith, and served as models for life in the bush. Some of these figures appear briefly, in chronicle fashion, in "A Testament of Hills" in the thirteenth stanza:

It was the legendary characters –
Dirty Dick,
Broomstick Annie
Eight-and-Biscuits Bronson,
Johnny on the Spot – (30)

"The Last Handfallers," however, surpasses "A Testament of Hills" in terms of expressing the social reality of the need for mythology in the world of logging while simultaneously creating and preserving it. In order to do so, however, it becomes necessary for the reader to somehow become involved in the myth, engaged in the mystique and awe that accompanies mythology. It is only through the active dialectical

¹⁹ For clarity I will use the terms myth and mythology to indicate the Romance Mode and the Lyric of Emotion or Feeling of the mysticism type. This use will include the term legend which is sometimes used to indicate a human protagonist.

relationship between reader and poem that the mythology can be expressed, preserved and perpetuated. In this poem Trower engages the imaginative faculties of the reader by drawing the reader into the action of the poem immediately by beginning with the present progressive in the line “They’re coming up the trail” (38). The present progressive of “They’re coming” positions the reader on the same level as the action in the poem, yet the fact that the handfallers are coming “up” the trail positions the reader as an observer just above the scene, rather than a direct participant. Navigating the tension between macro and microcosm, Trower quickly moves from the active description of the whole *event* of the handfallers’ arrival in the first line to a particular *description* of the handfallers themselves, with their “big blue-veined hands” (38), in the second line. In fact, after the first line Trower never returns to the present progressive, but switches to the simple present concerning all actions of the handfallers. The position of the reader in the event at the first line, in conjunction with the shift in focus from an active event to vivid description and speculation, results in the reader becoming something of a voyeur, watching the emergence of the handfallers, attending to their every detail, speculating about their mystery:

They have stoical Svenska faces
white-stubbed
cured to creased red leather
by a many-weathered craft.

They have crinkled Svenska voices
like wind in the branches
of the countless killed trees
who have given them their tongues (38)

The “hidden gaze” in the poem thus creates a sense of mystique and mystery, the witnessing of something awe-inspiring and forbidden. The incremental repetition in the

refrain “They have” sets up and strengthens the sense of mystique by positing a realm of infinite possibilities concerning what other qualities these mysterious handfallers may possess.

Having created a tone and mood of mystique and mystery through the grammar and form of the poem, and thus creating an appropriate background for a mythology, Trower moves forward to fulfil other requirements necessary for the creation of a mythology. One of the most important elements of any mythology is the hero, in the case of “The Last Handfallers,” Svenska handfallers. Through the specific use of Svenska handfallers as the subject of the poem Trower simultaneously accomplishes several purposes. On one level it expresses Trower’s ability to reach back and capture the history of logging through the description of handfallers – a practice that was redundant by the time Trower was in the industry, yet one he witnessed when a crew of handfallers was brought out of retirement to log a particularly dangerous claim. Secondly, the fact that Trower specifically describes them as “Svenska” reflects the historical reality that the 1890s through to the 1940s saw several waves of immigration from Sweden. Many Swedes, fleeing famine and a land shortage in their homeland, immigrated to Canada via the United States and worked in various industries, one of which was logging.²⁰ Concerning the creation of a logging mythology, however, two things are happening. The first and most obvious is that by using the term “Svenska” Trower is making the origin of his legendary figures remote and somewhat mysterious, playing on the stereotype of the all powerful Swedish man from the north. Secondly, Trower positions the handfallers against the common enemy of the logger – the trees and the arduous lifestyle. In order to

²⁰ See “snoose” in the glossary for further mention of the proliferation of Swedes in the logging industry.

draw attention to these things Trower relies on elements of the lyric such as assonance, consonance, alliteration, and vivid description; his use of these alliterative techniques also connects his verse to heroic Anglo-Saxon and middle English verse. The heroic handfallers, true to convention, are ancient; “They are older than rumours” and are “like ancestral gunslingers” (38). The fact that “r” in “older” is consonant with those in “rumour,” and that the “s” sound in “ancestral” is consonant with “gunslingers,” simply adds to the emphasis of this convention. Drawing attention to the strong link these figures have to the land, another heroic characteristic, Trower has “mountain” assonate with “granite” in the line which describes the handfallers as “unbending as mountain granite” (38); the heavy stresses of the first syllable in the last two words reinforcing the power of these men. They are strong and have proven themselves in battle before, their “crinkled Svenska voices / like wind in the branches / of the countless killed trees who have given them their tongues” (38). Though the assonance of “tyrannical wooden handles,” the alliteration of the timber that “grudgingly gives,” and the consonance of “reluctant trees” suggests that the handfallers battle hard against the conditions of logging and the strength of the trees; the poem makes it clear that the handfallers triumph. Epitomizing strength and endurance, the handfallers are capable of “gnawing the big ones down” (38) with their teeth; the spondee and monosyllabic foot work to signify both the falling of the trees and the strength of the handfallers. The consonance of “hearing the undercut timber cry” emphasises utter defeat and pain of the trees coupled with the indifference of the triumphant handfallers. Hence, Trower creates in the handfallers heroes who do battle against the conditions of logging and win, and in doing so provides through mythology a model to live up to.

Another heroic figure present in logging mythology is the eponymous character in the poem “Granddaddy Tough,” a heroic ballad hybridized with the broadside ballad. Granddaddy Tough, portrayed with “a history of logging / in his muscles” (*Haunted* 24), is representative of the elevation of loggers to mythic proportions. His corded muscles not only contain the entire history of logging within their memory, but also each pull, push, axe stroke, and wound suffered during his logging career. He is simultaneously the literal history of his own logging career, and the cumulative history of those who came before: their stories, their legends, their trials and their tribulations. Granddaddy Tough’s mythic stature increases as “lost spar-trees / shudder in his eyes” (24) and “he roars yet / in the power of his age, / a leather veteran / of the mountain wars” (24). Trower raises Granddaddy Tough from mere mortal to iconic stature: “Among boys he walks / careless with experience” (25). What Trower does is take the mundane, the mortal, and raise it up to mythic proportions, creating legends of motivation, desire, and experience for generations to follow.

Another important characteristic of mythology is that of the mythological landscape. Traditionally such a landscape is described as being some sort of metaphysical or abstract place physically located amidst the clouds and mists above humanity as in Christianity and the Greek myths. In “The Last Handfallers” Trower inverts this convention by describing the handfallers as “coming *up* the trail” [my emphasis], and as having “returned to the resinous hills / like ancestral gunslingers / for one final showdown” (38). Furthermore, Trower, rather than locating his legendary figures in an abstract location, locates them in the concrete setting of “West Fork.” By having the handfallers ascending from their point of origin rather than descending, and by locating

them in the “West Fork setting,” Trower indicates that they have risen to the status of legend through their human attributes. Locating the handfallers in the concrete rather than in the abstract, Trower is able fill the particular need of loggers for a model that they could indeed live up to, aspire to, and believe in. Hence, Trower, by incorporating the legends of the logging days such as Granddaddy Tough, the Last Handfallers, Dirty Dick, Broomstick Annie, Eight-and-Biscuits Bronson, Johnny on the Spot, and so forth, into his poetry, he transforms their legendary stories into a unique mythology. In doing so he perpetuates the mythology, keeps it alive, and thus preserves both the mythology itself as well as the need that such a mythology satisfied in the face of constant mortal danger in a man made wasteland. The central narrative of the logger triumphant over adversity and over the land occurs again and again in Trower’s verse.

Death and danger are indeed realities of logging and, while touched upon in “A Testament of Hills,” they are magnified for examination in a poem like “Booby Trap” which overtly refers to the constant threat of death and injury faced by loggers in the bush: “He touches the chain to the bowed tree – / the tension explodes: / it splits like a sprung trap” (67). The tree catches the narrator of the poem “clean in the crotch –” and leaves him “so close to a eunuch it doesn’t bear dwelling on” (67). Images such as these are common in Trower’s poetry, often accompanied by mortal consequences. In “Collision Course” there is no “time to run” as the butt of a tree kicks back and “pins the man to the stump” and “his ribs snap like sticks” (71), the quick alliteration of the line emphasizing the action. Yet the historical reality of conditions in the bush is only one facet of the danger present in the logging industry. Just as dangerous is the mill work that surrounds logging. In “Industrial Poem” the narrator describes how “Slim Abernathy /

pushed the wrong button and wrapped his best friend / three times around a driveshaft / in directions bones won't bend" (56). The success of the industry and the ever increasing focus on production is expressed by the fact that even though "they'd hardly hurried him away from there / [...] / they cranked those expensive wheels up again" (56); the consonance of the "s" sounds in "those," "expensive," and "wheels" draws attention to the fact that the wheels are "expensive," but the worker is expendable. More overt than the tension between the classes alluded to in "A Testament of Hills," "Industrial Poem" makes the division between upper and lower class utterly clear. Having already established the dichotomy between the "expensive wheels" and the expendable labourer Trower hammers home his theme in the final stanza:

"Hamburger for lunch tonight, boys!"
joked a foreman to the crew.
I wish he'd smelled our hate but he never even flinched
as the red-flecked sheets came through (56)

The rhyme of "crew" with "through" firmly locating the victim with the labour "crew," and the lengthening of the third line as an indication of the depth and strength of the hate, together affirm the irrecoverable differences between the labourers and the progress driven foreman. Hence, Trower's poetry records not only the historical and social reality of working conditions in the bush, but also the working conditions in logging related work. Furthermore, Trower expresses the increasing divide between the working class and growing managerial class.²¹

²¹ Though I do not develop this idea further, it could be argued that the presence of the foreman rather than the mill owner is an indication of the merging of the managerial class with the upper class, or rather, the view that these two classes began to have increasing commonalities.

The success and progress associated with the logging industry in the late forties and early fifties effected changes not only to class relationships, but also to population settlement. Emblematic of one of these changes are the poems “Outhouse” and “The Reclaimed.” In “Outhouse” Trower describes an old logging camp where there is “Nothing left in sight / but that crazy sentrybox outhouse” (60). The main thrust of the poem is, perhaps, humour and irony around the fact that an outhouse, the bastion of embarrassment and shame at that which levels or equalizes all humanity, is all that remains of a logging camp, a symbol of humanity’s attempt at control over nature and the attempt to separate and elevate ourselves above other mammals through industry and progress. This theme is expressed beautifully in the fourth stanza with the lines

Built for the wars, that crapper
fashioned solid and lovingly
with even scrollwork around the eaves
straddled on two skookum logs
over the narrow creek mouth
Self-flushing –
an ingenious joy of a john (61)

Humour in this poem operates excellently through the dichotomy between progress and sophistication, and the instinctual biological euphoria of a bowel movement. The detail and sophistication of the scrollwork coupled with the simple joy of the “self-flushing” of the toilet over the river cannot help but to inspire ironic laughter in any reader.

Yet, beneath the obvious humour of the poem is an expression of the changing west coast landscape as well as the attitude of loggers surrounding this change. Focusing on the mundane, Trower draws attention to the complex reality of the time:

Brush has buried the rest.
Thirty years of wild growth erased
the garden in the gully.

The garbage heap tells how long –
bottles and cans from belly-up companies
gleam and rust in an alder thicket (60)

Here we have the image of a lost camp, an Edenic garden of human accomplishment buried under the brush of thirty years, reclaimed by nature. Beneath this mundane image of a forgotten camp is the historical reality of the consequences of the fervent focus on production and industry of the forties and fifties. As a result of this focus the federal and provincial government became ever more involved in the forestry industry. The most significant result of this focus was that forestry practices became regulated and concentrated. The bottles and cans from “belly-up companies” are indicative of the fact that the companies which produced them no longer exist. Yet the bottles and cans are left over not from the companies that produced them, but from the companies that brought them to this place in the bush. On this level, then, the “belly-up companies” represent the result of governmental regulations that caused the multitude of small logging outfits in British Columbia to dwindle as they were subsumed by, or consolidated and integrated into large multi-national corporations such as MacMillan Bloedel.

The attitude expressed by the loggers regarding this phenomenon becomes clear in the third stanza with the lines “Those fragile skull-eyed shacks / hard to find on a tanglewood ridge / are empty as a whore’s smile” (60). The whore, emblematic of the “selling of oneself,” is indicative of the fact that loggers felt as though they had been prostituted or “sold out” by the increasing involvement of the government and multinational corporations, the resulting concentration of logging practices, and the disappearance of the life that they once knew. As Howard White, editor of *Raincoast Chronicles* and founder of Harbour Publishing, states about his personal experience in the

industry, “We left in 1954 – victims of the Social Credit government’s policy of closing the woods to small free enterprise and delivering it over to the big monopolies...” (Barman 291).

Taking the regulation of the logging industry and the policies of the Social Credit government one step further is “The Reclaimed.” Here Trower introduces shock to his reader through the abrupt image of the “Overwhelmed homesteads / [that] lie crushed to the dirt / by adamant snows” (54). The “overwhelmed homesteads” represent the simultaneity of increased involvement of government in the logging industry and the concentration of the population of British Columbia in urban communities during the late fifties. As a result of this population shift many of British Columbia’s outlying communities became extinct, nothing more than “waterlogged boards” and “tottering fenceposts” (54). As Jean Barman relates in *The West Beyond the West*, “contemporaries lamented the passing of an era” (291). She further explains that “first the one-room school closed, then the sawmill shutdown. Very likely the post office soon followed. In some cases it was the end of steamer service that rang the death knell” (291). It is the sense of loss and abandonment, the passing of an era that “The Reclaimed” captures so beautifully in its nostalgic remembrances:

Stricken to phantoms
the feeders of dreams –
lost among stars
the sparks of their laughter.
All the wild hopes
the gadfly illusions
whimper from bedsprings
and rustguttled stoves (55)

Here the short, two stress lines charge the poem with a lyricism that conveys the fleeting nature of these homesteads and the dreams that they once held.

The influence of the lyric in Trower's poetry emphasizes the oral component of "The Reclaimed," the tendency of lyrical poems to remain true to their musical origins. The words of Lascelles Abercrombie on the nature of a lyric are particularly instructive: "a poet does not compose *in order to* make of language delightful and exciting music; he composes a delightful and exciting music in language *in order to* make what he has to say peculiarly efficacious in our minds" (Preminger 715). Trower succeeds in doing this in "The Reclaimed." Though metrical analysis is debatable, two discernable patterns are present in this poem, which, in turn, cause its musical quality or cadence. The poem, divided into five equal stanzas of eight lines, uses various combinations of either four or five syllables per line. One possible reading indicates a pattern of two iambs followed by a monosyllabic foot in the five syllable line with a trochee followed by an iamb in the four syllable line. Alternately, the poem can be read as having the same pattern, but interrupted occasionally to be replaced by a two trochee, monosyllabic foot pattern. In either case the poem is revealed to be highly structured in order to emphasize its cadence and the oral, musical nature of the lyric. Thus, it may be said that the natural rhythm and sound of the poem represent the natural cycle of life and death embodied by the cycle of humanity's presence and withdrawal, as well as nature's destruction and reclamation. As Herbert Read suggests, "in lyrical poetry what is conveyed is not mere emotion, but the imaginative prehension of emotional states" (Preminger 715). Further, there is Northrop Frye's assertion that lyrical poetry is "an internal mimesis of sound and imagery" (Preminger 715). Trower, by condensing meaning into precise images in the style of the

imagist poets, and by using structure to represent sound, allows his reader to conjure up the “imaginative prehension of emotional states” regarding those who once lived in the homesteads – their “gadfly illusions” – though he never overtly refers to them. By internalizing the sound-structure of the poem, the reader undergoes Frye’s “internal mimesis of sound and imagery.” Hence, to return to the examination of Trower’s work as an event, it can be said that Trower expresses the historical reality of the cycle of homesteading and abandonment of the late 1950s, as well as expresses the social reality of the loss and nostalgia that people felt during the shift of population from the outlying communities to urban centres. The last stanza of the poem “Elephant’s Graveyard” epitomizes Trower’s expression of the loss of a way of life in small towns and of the loss of a way life in the bush:

They are some of the last holdouts
in this evacuated country –
tonight, with wry resignation,
they speak of leaving too
as we drink beer and rum together
in the elephant’s graveyard of a bay
with this day –
all the days and ways
dying inexorably around us (87)

Intimately involved with the mortal conditions of the logging industry as well as being surrounded by the death of trees and animals as Trower was, it is no surprise that his poetry is often imbued with a sense of loss and nostalgia. In fact, much of his logging poetry can be read as a pre-figuration of ecocritical writing as he navigates the tension between celebration, transgression and nostalgia. This parallels the increasing social and political awareness of logging as both a resource that was being actively destroyed and depleted, and one which was renewable through proper regulation and management. It is

readily apparent from the examination of such poems as “A Testament of Hills” and “The Last Handfallers” that Trower’s logging poems express the celebration, pride, and bravado that are present as a result of accomplishment concomitant with extreme and perilous working conditions. Yet, even a cursory examination of Trower’s logging poems also reveals the fact that the practice of logging is always coupled with images of transgression, violence, theft, exploitation, victimization, loss, and nostalgia. The cost that the “mountain wars” of logging impose on the land consistently percolates through Trower’s poetry. Even a seemingly innocuous poem such as “The Animals” fails in its promise of an untouched, romanticized nature, harmonized with the machinations of humanity. The poem begins with a simple description of a marten as a part of nature, and in the second stanza moves into a description of “two deer” who “watch curiously” as the men “fumble cold cables” (*Haunted* 42), thus presenting readers with a simple yet pleasant picture of human interaction with nature. It is in the fourth stanza, however, where Trower deals his readers a visceral blow, and destroys the illusion of a wilderness in harmony with and untainted by humanity:

November’s feathers
twitch from a colourwring sky
settling like a white moss of reprieve
on the wrecked hill.
Blood oozes from a hemlock stump
as I savage its bark with a powersaw (42)

Trower’s masterful use of the heavy stresses in “Blood,” “oozes,” “stump,” and “bark,” compounded with the assonance of the “o’s” in the fifth line that places emphasis on “oozes,” force the savagery and destruction of the scene onto the reader. Trower’s other poems invariably follow this pattern of imagery of despoliation with phrases such as “skinned land,” “bandaging brown wounds,” “brown carnage,” “broken trees,” “vanished

virgin forests,” “torn slopes,” and “vanquished valley.” Yet, this imagery of violence and transgression is not used to simply indicate a stereotypically masculine celebratory sense of pride and conquest, but is used to focus on the dualistic situation and emotions of those in the logging industry – those who were dependant on destruction for livelihood and on an activity which resulted in the destruction of that very same activity.

The preceding proposition is made clear in “Goliath Country” where the reader is witness to the dispossessed and desolate wildlife left behind: “Birds circle bewildered / in a scathing grey rain” (19), witnesses of the wasteland below. Disorientated at the utter lack of recognition, the birds circle, confused as to the direction they must now take, trying to register the loss of their habitat. The scathing grey rain, while accurately describing the weather of British Columbia’s west coast, is possibly suggestive of the pollution and toxicity now present to all living things. In a plea for old growth forests Trower describes the scene with poignancy:

There has been great havoc here,
an enormous slaughtering.
Some David has run amok
with a relentless sling
leaving a broken green chaos
an apocalypse of wood
and a new void in the universe
where Goliaths once stood (19)

Inverting the biblical story of David and Goliath, Trower empowers individuals to become powerful agents of destruction while also condemning them for creating a break – “a new void” – in the universe. The “Goliaths,” the old growth trees, cannot be replaced, and indeed their world has become apocalyptic with their demise. Yet, rather than ending his poem with a vague sense of lamentation, Trower thrusts further and

returns to the mythic in an allusion to the poetry of Homer. Cuing his reader with the phrase “driven chariots” (19), Trower finishes by describing “men long travelled / who return to find their homes gone / and the town levelled” (19). Ironically, the “Davids” that Trower empowers through his verse to destroy the “Goliaths,” have returned to find that they have destroyed themselves. With this ironic reversal Trower brilliantly displays the dualistic nature of the logging profession and the consequences of logging on the environment while also emphasizing the sense of loss and emptiness that accompanies the act of logging.

This sense of loss is also present in “Spar-Tree Raising” which should be a celebratory poem of accomplishment at the raising of a spar-tree:

The Tree went up at last
and stood like a symbol
against the sky
where we'd stuck it (*Chainsaws* 32)

The poem chronicles the trouble that the loggers had in raising the spar-tree, often feeling as if “the tree jeered voicelessly at [their] efforts” (32). Yet at last there was success:

Now it stood like a Gulliver
tethered by guy-lines compliant at last
and I think we sighed in relief –
had drinks from the water-bag perhaps joked (33)

In spite of the success of the spar-tree raising, the feeling of celebration and accomplishment falls flat in this poem, the last stanza bereft of joy. The narrator of the poem can no longer remember the reaction to this seemingly momentous event, the word “think” casting doubt on the power of the moment, the word “perhaps” casting doubt on whether or not any joking took place at all. The lack of emotional adjectives, and the

pauses coupled with the doubt signified by the terminology in this last stanza create an emotional vacuum, a sense of something lost rather than a success gained. Trower's ecocritical approach to poetry suggests that the loggers are trapped trying to navigate the tension between celebration success and pride, and transgression violence and loss. In ecocritical terms Trower is describing how the loggers are partially under the sway of Descartes' philosophy of the mind-body division: since the body is secondary, it and nature are denigrated and can be both abused and exploited. Concurrently, however, the loggers operate under the environmental concerns of English Romanticism through to the beginning of the twentieth century; they are involved in what amounts to ecological and environmental transgression and exploitation with dire consequences, and thus feel a sense of nostalgia, loss, and emptiness as a result.

"A Crooked Coliseum for the Wind" furthers the ecocritical ideas of English Romanticism through to the early twentieth century. In this poem Trower describes a "vanquished valley" (*Chainsaws* 98) that has been logged off, leaving behind "slopes of well-considered devastation" (98). It is clear that Trower is suggesting that the devastation is "well-considered" both in the sense of forestry management and planning, or, an ironic lack thereof, and in the sense that this type of devastation is perennially present and considered in the minds of those who caused it and are now witness to it. In the third and final stanza of the poem, however, the valley is described as shrugging "unconcernedly" (98) at the fact of its own devastation. The narrator factually reports that "it will re clothe itself in unfathomable time / when we are gone beyond reckoning / with our insect energies and sweats" (98), again holding to the view that human absence from

nature is the only possible means to restore a romanticized rhythm to nature, to restore nature to its original state of being.

What is unique about the poetry of Trower is his ability to successfully bring together the two occupations that Laurie Ricou in *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest* suggests couldn't be "more disparate" (117). Trower himself asserts that

logging might not at first glance, seem a particularly fruitful source-area for serious poetry. It has traditionally been a noisy, brutal, hardheaded trade, practised for the most part by men considerably longer on muscle than book-learning and prone to be distrustful of anything more aesthetic than a western paperback or a skin magazine. (*Caulk-Boot Legacy* 214)

Yet this is exactly what Trower does, combining the occupations of poet and logger to produce a poetry that can be read in Said's words as a cultural event which expresses the historical and social realities of logging in British Columbia, from the mortally dangerous nature of the occupation, to the concentration of the industry into multinational corporations, to the social need for a unique mythology, to later concerns about the environment. To return to the introductory epigraph, Trower's logging poetry can be understood in terms of both part and whole; it is a part from which the whole of the logging industry in British Columbia can be glimpsed and understood, as well as a part that can only be understood in terms of the whole – a poet and a poetry that could only have been produced as a result of the conditions of the time.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CHANNELING OF POETIC TRADITION

In “A is for Axe: Peter Trower’s Gruntwork” Carmine Starnino remarks that Peter Trower is “one of the few poets of his generation to channel the flow of sumptuary colloquial English that courses from Chaucer to Clare through Hopkins and Hardy to Frost. This is one of the central traditions of English Poetry, but is rarer to find in Canadian literature...” (34). Starnino’s statement describing Trower’s poetic highlights several important things. The most remarkable idea that Starnino points to is that Trower is unique in that he forms a nexus of sorts, encompassing his English background, his life experiences, his presence in the “West Coast Scene” of the 1960s and ‘70s, as well as his ability to express all of these things through his poetry. A second idea that Starnino points to is Trower’s superior ability to both use and channel the flow of “sumptuary colloquial English” that not only courses through the Romantics, Victorians Georgians, but also through the Modernist and Imagist movements, as well as the humanist²² tradition of British Columbia.²³ Thus, Trower, according to the hermeneutical part/whole relationship, as well as Said’s premise of reading a text as a cultural event, can on one

²² For the purpose of this paper the term humanist will refer to the more contemporary usage of the term, indicating those thinkers “who base truth on human experience and reason and base values on human nature and culture” (Abrams 117). My usage aligns more with Wilhelm Dilthey’s differentiation between the natural sciences and the human sciences.

²³ It is important to note that regarding the traditions that Trower follows, they are largely masculine-gendered traditions; the discourse that Trower models his poetry on is predominantly a masculine discourse.

hand be located factually; his biography, his friendships, the traditions he follows, all provoke insight into his poetry and identify him as a crucial component of the hub of the West Coast scene of the '60s and 70s. On the other hand the channeling of language in the poetry itself offers insight, a snapshot, a glimpse of the literary tradition that flows back through British Columbia, Canada, and England. To examine this phenomenon a brief foray into the history of Canadian poetry is instrumental in locating Trower's work along the continuum of the English-Canadian poetic tradition.

The earliest Canadian poetry in English originates in the early seventeenth century, often written by visitors to Newfoundland such as William Vaughan with *The Golden Fleece in 1626*, and Robert Hayman with²⁴ *Quodlibets, lately come over from New Britaniola, Old Newfoundland* in 1628. Generally, these poets wrote descriptive verse about the new land in which they found themselves, or about the military actions which they witnessed around them. Yet, the Canadian poetic tradition didn't really begin until the late seventeenth, early eighteenth century when Loyalist refugees from the American Revolution flooded into Canada, settling in the areas of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Upper Canada. Large numbers of immigrants from Britain also began to arrive following the Napoleonic wars, mostly composed of "unwilling exiles who brought their preconceptions about life and poetry with them" (Preminger 161). As the nineteenth century progressed, native-born Canadians began to turn to poetry, and the concept of a poetic tradition emerged that relied on earlier periods of English poetry as its foundation.

²⁴ A friend of Ben Jonson, Hayman became governor of the colony of Harbour Grace in Newfoundland in 1621.

In the late nineteenth century, the so-called Confederation Poets arrived on the scene, signalling a new poetic voice in Canada. Charles G.D. Roberts, Archibald Lampman, Duncan Campbell Scott, Bliss Carmen, and Wilfred Campbell among others presented a poetic voice that

not only celebrated Canadian scenes...but also reported with accuracy the life they laboured. Realism inevitably entered the process, as it always does when writers have to recognize the nature of the world they inhabit before they can apply it to the transfiguring processes of the imagination (Preminger 161)

While each of the Confederation poets eventually revolutionized Canadian poetry in their own unique way, they also relied heavily on Romantic and Victorian models for their verse. Lampman, a friend of both Scott and Roberts, was partly trained in poetry by his father, a classical scholar and disciple of Pope. Lampman, though an admirer of Milton, Keats, Tennyson, Wordsworth and Arnold, was influenced most heavily by Keats. In “Heat” the influence of Keats’s “negative capability” can be readily discerned:

And yet to me not this or that
Is always sharp or always sweet;
In the sloped shadow of my hat
I lean at rest, and drain the heat;
Nay more, I think some blessed power
Hath brought me wandering idly here:
In the full furnace of this hour
My thoughts grow keen and clear (Smith 177)

According to Keats, negative capability refers to “when a man is capable of *being* [my emphasis] in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason” (in Abrams 174). In the last stanza of “Heat,” above, the speaker is “being” in the liminal uncertainty between “this” and “that,” and between the qualities of “sweet” and “sharp” which are never certain or absolute, and thus the speaker always operates in the doubt, mystery, and uncertainty between them. The “keen” and “clear” thoughts of the

speaker embody another aspect of negative capability – that the author must maintain an aesthetic distance from his or her work. Though there is a hint of the reflective contemplation that is so necessary to Wordsworth’s poetic, the spontaneous overflow of emotion that accompanies it is absent; the speaker, residing in the “full furnace” of the heat, never reaches for fact or reason, instead maintaining an aesthetic distance from the objects around him, and thus embodying the idea of aesthetic distance behind negative capability.

Similar in scope and range to Lampman is the poet Wilfred Campbell, whom George Wicken remarks “is chiefly concerned with nature, and the influence of the English Romantics is apparent in almost every poem” (in Toye 99). Indeed in the first and last stanza of “A Lake Memory,” both the Romantic concern with nature and the spontaneous overflow of emotion are evident:

The lake comes throbbing in with voice of pain
Across these flats, athwart the sunset’s glow.
I see her face, I know her voice again,
Her lips, her breath, O God, as long ago.
.....
I call her back across the vanished years,
Nor vain – a white-armed phantom fills her place;
Its eyes the windblown sunset fires, its tears
This rain of spray that blows about my face (in Smith 188-89)

These two passages could serve equally well as book-end stanzas to the words of Wordsworth in “Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey”

These beautiful forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man’s eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and ‘mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet (In Perkins 301)

In his *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth states that “poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings; it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before....does itself actually exist in the mind” (in Perkins 432). The influence of Wordsworth’s poetic on Campbell is abundantly clear in the last stanza of “A Lake Memory” through the line “I call her back across the years,” indicating “emotion recollected in tranquillity;” the presence of “an emotion, kindred to that which was before” is readily apparent in the final two lines where the speaker is overcome by emotion, indicated by the consonance of “sunset” with “fires” and tears,” as well as the assonance of “rain,” “spray,” and “face.”

This is not to suggest that the Confederation Poets offered nothing more than a simplistic imitation of their Romantic precursors and models, for indeed their contribution to the Canadian poetic tradition is paramount, for the first time providing a uniquely Canadian voice in English Canadian poetry. Rather than simply imitating English Romanticism, the Confederation Poets assimilated aspects of these traditions into their poetry to create something new. My purpose here is simply to illustrate that these poets were, to some extent, anchored in older traditions and that, to a large extent, English Romanticism percolates through the Canadian poetic tradition.

With the appearance of W.W.E. Ross in the early twentieth century, the poetic tradition of Canada seemed to fragment into different yet intermingling strains. While any category, label, or group is reductive and limiting, for the sake of convenience I suggest that in the early twentieth century, Canadian poetry broke into three overlapping

and intersecting strains. One group, consisting of poets such as Earle Birney and Al Purdy, followed from the tradition of the Confederation poets and continued to write under the influence of English Romanticism and Victorianism, eventually establishing a firmly grounded humanist or geohistorical tradition in Canada. The second two groups, both gravitating toward an emerging Canadian modernism and associated with the journals *The McGill Fortnightly Review*, *Preview*, and *First Statement*, developed under the influence of the later works of Duncan Campbell Scott and Charles G.D. Roberts as they broke free of the confines of metrically traditionalist verse. These latter groups were also heavily influenced by the work of Ross, who “brought to Canadian poetry a new simplicity of expression and an emphasis on imagistic clarity” (Preminger 162), and thereby initiated or ushered in the imagist movement in Canadian Poetry. One of these groups of Canadian Modernists became primarily associated with the journal *Preview*²⁵ and consisted of those poets who assimilated the lessons of modernism, but looked to the socially conscious poets of 1930s Britain for inspiration. The other group of Canadian Modernists revolved around the journal *First Statement*²⁶ and generally looked to the models of Ezra Pound, Marianne Moore, and William Carlos Williams for inspiration. These three groupings are neither static nor exclusive, often based on associations developed for the purpose of publishing rather than an unwavering commitment to a single poetic. Concerning the poetry of Peter Trower, I will focus on the Romantic-humanist tradition as well as the strain of imagism in his poetry since his poetry aligns more closely with these traditions than with the socially conscious poets of England and

²⁵ Founded by Patrick Anderson, and associated with the poets P.K. Page, Dorothy Livesay, F.R. Scott, and A.M. Klein.

²⁶ Associated with Louis Dudeck, Raymond Souster, and Irving Layton.

Canada, his poetic being a combination of these categories, as well as the tenets of the Georgian poetry of the early twentieth century.

Trower's poetry most closely resembles that of Georgian poetry in many aspects; yet, ultimately he takes the lessons of the Georgians, assimilates them, alters them, and surpasses them to create his own unique poetic. Trower's poetic internalizes and thereby transforms the tenets of Romanticism, Imagism, and Georgianism to produce a poetry which is completely his own. Trower's poetic is one which often affirms the value inherent in darkness, loss and absence; it is characterized by the Virgilian sense of *lacrimae rerum*, the "sadness of life [or] tears shed for the sorrows of men" ("*lacrimae rerum*").²⁷ It is this quality that stands out foremost in Trower's verse – the recognition that the qualities of sadness and absence are simply a composite part of the accretion of experience that is part of being human. As such, these qualities need not be devalued or assigned negative moral and social valuations, but, rather, should be valued and esteemed.

The Romantic-Humanist Tradition

Trower, arriving in British Columbia in 1940 and beginning to write steadily in the fifties and sixties, operates under three critical influences in regard to the humanist tradition. The first influence is that of his childhood experiences in England where he was not only exposed to the poetic tradition of England at school, but was constantly read poetry to by his mother who was an elocutionist. Evidence of the influence of Trower's childhood in

²⁷ Sometimes written as "*lachrymal rerum*."

England on his poetry can be found in such poems as “The Last Stand of Magic,” the last stanza in particular:

In the last stand of Magic
Merlin succumbs to glib formulas
as we pragmatize
destroying the old defences
against the dark (*Ragged* 91)

Here Trower’s love of fantasy fiction, originating from the novels of J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis that were introduced to him at Dragon School in England, is foregrounded as he laments the celebration of logic, science, and reason over the supersensuous and supernatural, and is thus also indicative of the influence of English Romanticism. In “The Last Stand of Magic” the narrator, like Keats, is concerned with the “irritating reaching after fact and reason,” and prefers instead to reside in the realm of the uncertain, the realm of liminal spaces such as the dark which are rife with magical possibility. Trower, aligning himself with the Romantic fascination with the category of the sublime, or that which suggests the “reality of a supersensuous or noumenal realm of being” (Perkins 11), describes how

Myths cringe against cliffs
defenceless under the guns
of logic’s assassins,
fall by final rivers (*Ragged* 91)

The realm of myth and magic, of the mysterious and unimaginable, is always present in Trower’s poetry, in this case represented by cringing myths. The *étalage du moi*, or display of the self which characterizes Romantic poetry, is also a strong presence in the poem, Trower making clear both his frustrated stance at the triumph of science over myth and the supernatural, and the influence his childhood in England had on his later poetry.

In conjunction with, and amalgamating the presence of Trower's childhood experience in his poetry, is the influence of the masculine Romantic tradition that percolated up through the Confederation poets to Earle Birney and Al Purdy, both of whom were friends and mentors of Trower. Birney, though he came out of the second wave of Canadian Modernists, also wrote poems such as "David," and "Images in Place of Logging," which manifest the Romantic obsession with nature and remembrance; thus his poetry often reflects a strong Romantic presence similar to that of the Confederation poets he was successor to. Similarly, Trower's poetry manifests a preoccupation with nature and memory, the majority of his poetry focusing in on scenes remembered from his personal experience. The first stanza of "The Corkscrew Trees of Kitselas" reads,

The corkscrew trees of Kitselas
twist up from the primeval moss
of the ancient forest
as though two giant hands
had wrung them like dishrags (*Haunted* 53)

The above stanza's attention to detail in describing this forest scene could well be a precursor to the opening stanza of Birney's "Images in Place of Logging"

Where quiet slid
through needled vaulting
iron brontosaurus
have crashed and bred
The steelshagged wolves
have barked and buried
green bones where deer
had arching fed (*Selected Poems* 129)

Both poems exhibit the "persistent reference to nature and natural objects" (Perkins 9) characteristic of Romantic poetry, even the mechanical logging apparatuses – the "iron

brontosaurus” and “steelshagged wolves” – in Birney’s poem taking on the attributes of the natural world, becoming enmeshed with nature.

Yet the Romantics were not content with simple or general descriptions of nature, but rather with “close attention to concrete particulars” (Perkins 9). As Blake remarks in a marginal notation, “To Generalize, is to be an idiot. To Particularize is the Alone Distinction of Merit (sic.)” (in Perkins 9-10). I suggest that this aspect of the Romantic poetic is also present in the poetry of Purdy who, as Laurie Ricou observes, is a “poet of precise visual images” (27). Ricou further remarks that “to establish history in the present of his poems, Purdy must visualize in his imagination the places and objects of the past” (27), thus again linking up early twentieth century poetry with the Romantic tradition. To complete the path of influence from the Romantics through to Purdy, I again turn to Ricou who posits in *The Arbutus/Madrone Files* that “the most significant poet, so far, to give us some sense of the literary possibilities of the loggers’ verbal universe – and also the British Columbian poet most like Al Purdy – is Peter Trower” (128), thereby locating Trower both as working under the influence of Purdy, and in the Romantic humanist tradition.

To return to Blake’s precision of image, it is clear that Trower, like Purdy, Birney and the Romantics, makes prevalent use of the particularized. He does not operate solely at the level of macrocosm, but offers microcosmic detail in virtually all of his poetry. He writes not of trees, but of “The corkscrew trees of Kitselas,” devoting an entire poem to the “strange trees / coiling like brown narwhal horns / toward the thin October sun –” (*Haunted* 53). In other poems, Trower conjoins precise microcosmic detail with the Romantic propensity for “emotion recollected in tranquillity.” In “The Last-Spar Tree on

Elphinstone Mountain,” Trower opens with a vivid description of the scene, using knowledge he absorbed at the Vancouver School of Art to “paint in words” (Interview) the image he wants to convey:

The last spar-tree on Elphinstone Mountain
through drunken-Sunday binoculars
pricks the blue bubble of the sky
on that final ridge where the scar tissue peters out (*Haunted* 122)

Yet, the constant in Trower’s poetry, the fact that he is always operating from direct personal experience, renders this stanza a memory of a past scene or event. Similar to Wordsworth, Trower revisits his memories in tranquillity in order to re-activate the picture in his mind and distil it for his poetry. Similar to the Wordsworthian poetic are the remarks of the speaker in the third stanza of “The Last Spar-Tree on Elphinstone Mountain”:

My eyes need no caulk boots
I can vault to that ridge in my mind,
stand at the foot of that tree, forlorn as a badly used woman
become merely landmark and ravenperch (122)

The presence of Wordsworth’s “inner eye” in “I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud,” or in the revisiting of Tintern Abbey, is exceedingly clear in “The Last Spar-Tree....” Trower, expertly displaying the power of recollected emotion, expresses the ability to “vault to that ridge” in his mind at anytime or place in order to re-create and distil the moment. In another of Trower’s poems, “Sifting the Debris,” this aspect of his poetic is also present. Here the speaker states,

I am sifting the debris of several lifetimes
in this sold shell of a house
this womb of memories and crumbling wood

where I have coiled like a foetus
for too many years (*Haunted* 116)

Though the rapturous and celebratory aspect of the Romantic overflow of powerful feeling is absent in Trower's poetry, the speaker is clearly involved in a journey through memory, one that is thick with nostalgia rather than euphoria. In Trower's poetry there is always a haunting, supernatural quality to the poem, as if Wordsworth's inner eye has failed to re-activate the memory accurately, and it lies forever just beyond reach, only the "detritus" (*Haunted* 116) left to recapture. Whether owing to his childhood in England, his voracious reading of poetry, or his experience with contemporary poets, the tradition that ensues from the Romantics through to the Confederation Poets as well as Purdy and Birney is unmistakably prevalent in the work of Trower.

The geohistorical tradition of humanistic, experiential poetry that runs through British Columbia and the Pacific Northwest is the third critical influence that Trower operates under within the strain of humanism that was developing across Canada as a whole.²⁸ The first explorers of the region of British Columbia wrote of the sublime landscape they beheld, and of the daily ordeals they underwent. Diaries of exploration such as those by James Cook and George Vancouver have become historical documents, and even John R. Jewitt's *Narrative of Adventures and Sufferings* published in 1815 functions in a dual role as both literature and history. By combining vivid description of place with a chronicle of the life they led, the early writers of British Columbia established a firm tradition of geohistorical works.

²⁸ See Laurie Ricou, *The Arbutus/Madrone Files. Reading the Pacific Northwest*.

Emerging in the late nineteenth century in British Columbia is famed ballad writer Robert William Service.²⁹ Service continues the geohistorical tradition in British Columbia through the adoption of the romantic ballad and through his focus on the landscape around him. Writing mainly humorous, overly dramatic ballads of the north, his most famous being “The Shooting of Dan McGrew” and “The Cremation of Sam McGee,” Service wrote and published feverishly, quickly becoming a poet of international repute. Though his subject matter focuses predominantly on the north, his importance to the geohistoric tradition of British Columbia can be felt through the adoption of his style by poet and engineer Robert Eugene Swanson.

Swanson, publishing four volumes of poetry which sold upwards of eighty thousand copies, became a “bunkhouse” name in the world of logging; his books of verse were a likely find in any logging camp in the Pacific Northwest. For my purposes, Swanson’s work is significant for two principal reasons. The first is that it continues to ground the poetic tradition of British Columbia in the humanist, geohistorical tradition. Secondly, Swanson’s work is important because of his direct influence on Trower. Trower himself acknowledges this debt in his poem “The King of Rhymes and Whistles:”

Doggerel hero, spurred on by Bob Service,
 your ballads banged through my boyhood

 The woods you described were a storybook place,
 a northern Old West with loggers for cowboys (*Haunted* 129)

The debt is paid in full when Trower, in this autobiographical poem, remarks that though he began to write his own poetry, “...the loggers had yours by heart, Bob Swanson. / You

²⁹ Service spent 1896 at a farm ranch near Duncan on Vancouver Island, British Columbia, 1899-1903 at the same ranch near Duncan after travelling to the United States and Mexico, and 1903-1909 at various banks in Victoria, Kamloops, Whitehorse and Dawson (Yukon Territory).

were their king of rhymes and whistles.” (129). Unlike Swanson, however, Trower is never satisfied with the “storybook place” of Swanson’s logging ballads and found that his “woods kingdom had a few drawbacks – / bugs, hellish weather, and wall-to-wall danger” (129). For Trower, realism and verisimilitude in poetry are necessities, as is the necessity for all poetry to reside in lived experience.

In this predisposition toward a poetry securely cemented in experience and realism, Trower is again aligned with fellow poets Birney and Purdy, as well as the next generation of poets they inspired, Newlove and Lane in particular. Lane in “To the Outlaw,” a poetic exposition on the nature of poetry, remarks “A poet is neither trained nor taught. He is the outlaw surging beyond the only freedom he knows, beauty in bondage, and so spins towards the margins of his experience...” (211), and further on in the same exposition states that “poetry survives in the valley of experience. It is the living of pain and poverty, fear and frustration, soul and starvation, love and living, decrepitude and death” (212). Concurrently, Lane is thus aligned with autodidacts, Trower and Purdy, with the humanist-experiential tradition of poetry, and with Birney, a poet described by critic Les McLeod as “the humanist, the affirmer of life” (155), but one whose “humanism is anchored in human reality. [His] affirmation arises only from an unflinching acceptance of man’s destructiveness, his death wish...” (155).

Trower and the poets he associated most closely with maintained this ideal of poetry rooted in experience. Though this stance has resulted in Trower remaining largely unrecognized by academia, his steadfastness in writing poetry in the humanist and Canadian geohistorical tradition has recently brought him recognition in the form of the Jack Chalmers award. Moreover, amidst what Carmine Starnino suggests is an era in

which academia is neither interested in “working first-hand” nor in “the grassroots energies of [their] subject and [has] no nose for finding its groundbreaking moments” (34), Trower’s poetry is finally receiving critical attention. Further stating that “the professoriat’s main contribution to 21st century Canadian poetry has been to ignore its shifting-and-developing complexity” (34) and that “we need to return our poetry to a condition of singularity and strangeness,” (34) Starnino declares: “if an underdog is what these knuckly grub-streeters need, a poet in perpetual endgame against the status quo, they could scarcely do better than Peter Trower” (34).

Canadian Modernism

Curiously enough, the modernist-imagist movement in Canada that is largely attributed to the influence of American and English poets was conceived of in Canada. As Barry Callaghan remarks in his introductory memoir to *Shapes & Sounds, Poems of W.W.E. Ross*,

T.E. Hulme, the English literary theorist and poet, boarded a cargo boat for Montreal in July of 1906. And Hulme crossed the Ontario north and the prairies. Struck by the vast forests and the flat spaces, he recognized that the vague, artificial language of late-nineteenth-century verse was simply inadequate. What was needed to capture a landscape so raw was direct poetic statement, a language that was clear and hard, images that would convey immediately the incomprehensible prairies and northland (4-5)

Shortly after Hulme returned to England the Imagist movement began to take shape under poets Ezra Pound, H.D., William Carlos Williams, and Amy Lowell among others. In Canada, it was the later verse of Duncan Campbell Scott and Charles G.D. Roberts that began to break free of the confines of traditional, metrically regular poetry. Yet it wasn’t until 1930 with the publication of *Laconics* by W.W.E. Ross that Canada witnessed its

first imagist poet. Though Ross was academically neglected and coldly received by his contemporaries, later poets came to recognize that he represented not only the birth of the imagist movement in Canada, but was also an imagist poet who specifically “set out to articulate the Canadian setting and experience” (Precosky 5). I suggest, along with Precosky, that the best description of Ross’s imagist poetic is that of Peter Stevens in “On W.W.E. Ross:”

...the scene is pared down to its basic simplicities. Each line is self contained, yet each line elaborates, or qualifies the preceding line so that although on the surface the poem is presenting a static scene, it, in fact, is a constantly shifting pattern with the focus moving in to pick up a detail, then altering to a different viewpoint, in order to show a wider panorama, making the poem specific and general at the same time (in Precosky 8)

In fact, Ross’s poem is almost an exact embodiment of the tenets of Imagist poetry that Pound developed. Glenn Hughes in *Imagism and the Imagists. A Study in Modern Poetry*, relates the four “cardinal principle of Imagism” (26) as described by Ezra Pound in the March 1913 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*:

- [1] Direct treatment of the ‘thing,’ whether subjective or objective.
- [2] To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
- [3] As regards rhythm, to compose in sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.
- [4] To conform to the ‘doctrine of the image (26-7)

It is this poetic, expressed by Pound and by Ross among others, which inspired emerging poets in Canada, those in Montreal in particular.³⁰

³⁰ In 1924 *The McGill Daily Literary Supplement* was established by editors F.R. Scott and A.J.M. Smith, later becoming *The McGill Fortnightly Review* in 1925 and *The Canadian Mercury* in 1928. Though modernist poetry in Canada did not really come into its own until the 1940s, writers such as A.M. Klein, Raymond Knister, Arthur Stringer, and Frank Oliver Call, were already experimenting with it in the Twenties and Thirties. Later groups of modernist poets formed in Montreal in the 1940s around the journals *Preview* and *First Statement*.

Trower, though writing in the Romantic, geo-historical tradition, was also influenced by the modernist movement; he was exposed to Pound and the other imagists in his childhood, and had direct experience with their writings in the 1950s through to the 1970s when he was writing most of his poetry. Furthermore, as the Canadian “poetry scene” moved from Montreal to Vancouver in the 1960s and ‘70s, coinciding with a publishing boom that saw the creation of presses such as Harbour Publishing, New Star, Arsenal Pulp Press, Talonbooks, Very Stone House and blewointment press,³¹ Trower was able to intersect and interact with other poets from across the country – among the modernist poets, Layton and Souster, and Livesay in particular. The breadth and quality of these influences reinforce the unmistakable imagist presence in Trower’s poetry.

One of Trower’s poems in which the influence of imagism figures predominantly is “Summer Microcosm.” The precise use of both macrocosmic and microcosmic imagery, the “direct treatment” of the object, and the effacement of words unnecessary to the presentation are all masterfully handled:

Tethered by two clotheslines
the house hangs moored in the garden,
green waves beat
on the grey-white hull of its walls
.....
Tiny orange fragment
of nervous muslin:
a butterfly takes inventory
among the fevered roses (*Haunted* 96)

³¹ For a detailed history of publishing in Canada see Roy MacSkimming, *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers*.

In looking at this poem as a whole, each individual stanza begins with a statement or declaration about summer such as “In the silver maple,” “Stocky late cornstalks,” and “The peach tree.” By positioning a declaration of summer in the first line of each of the eleven stanzas, and subsequently qualifying it, Trower exemplifies the imagist idea of breaking down the image of the poem – in this case summer – to its constitutive components. Each stanza becomes a self-contained imagist poem juxtaposed against the rest; when the stanzas are linked, however, they form a cohesive whole. The term “summer,” rather than conjuring up a literal definition of “the warmest season of the year,” evokes instead a succession of images, memories, emotions and experiences of the past. Indeed, the title of the poem itself, coupled with Trower’s declarations on summer, captures the macrocosm of the season in a succession of phenomena which have been distilled into the microcosm of his poem.

In the first stanza of “Summer Microcosm,” the reader is instantly positioned as both present to the poem through Trower’s use of the present tense in the verb “hangs,” indicating an action that is occurring now, and as an observer of the scene, playing on the implication of the present tense as indicating an action that occurs habitually or is generally true; this is both a specific summer, and every summer. In fact, Trower never strays from the present tense in this poem, anchoring the reader in the experiences of summer through the pattern of grammar. Drawn in this way at the outset, the reader is both experiencing and witness to the “hanging house” that is secured by “two clotheslines.” The reader experiences the present moment of the specific summer scene in the poem, while also positioned as a witness, an observer in which role she can experience the evocation of all of summer’s possible signifieds and the evocation of the

idea of summer itself as it habitually occurs year after year. The relationship between the clotheslines and the house has been inverted. Rather than serving as an anchor or a place of security and stability, the house has been “set adrift” in nature, its permanence and immovability called into question in the fantasies of summer. Yet the visual picture of summer is incomplete, and Trower adds the sound of the “green waves” beating against the “grey-white hull” of the house. It is this rhythmic beating that signals the rhythm of the seasons, and the vibrant rhythmic pulse of the summer heat which further emphasises the dichotomy between the natural and the created, the season and the house. In the face of the beating green waves, and tethered only by two clotheslines, the created, the man-made in the form of the house, becomes insignificant, as indeed occurs in the weather of summer as the outdoors draws the focus of human activity away from the home. Hence, even in this short stanza, Trower is able to condense some of the vastness of summer into a few precise lines.

This is true also for the fifth stanza. Trower, beginning with the line “Tiny orange fragment,” captures all the myriad flashings of colour present to any summer scene, the quick and tiny flashes caught and trapped by peripheral vision. In true imagist fashion he simultaneously limits and elaborates the image of flashing orange with the subsequent line: “of nervous muslin.” Here the “orange fragment” is limited to muslin cloth, while also expanded to give a fuller, more complete image, both of the summer and of the orange fragment. Trower is expertly able to both reduce and enlarge his image at will. This pattern is carried further to the next line as the “orange fragment” is transformed through limitation once again to become a butterfly, and “nervous” expands to suggest both the quick flight pattern of the butterfly as well as the flutter of its wings. In the final

line of the stanza, “among the fevered roses,” the picture is limited again to a garden setting, yet also expands to become a complete imagist poem of summer in and of itself. Navigating between micro and macrocosm, limitation and expansion, Trower uses each stanza as a stand-alone imagist poem, that both limits the scene, while also expanding and coalescing into a coherent whole that signifies in linguistic terms the myriad possibilities and realms of signifieds represented by the signifier “summer.”

The Georgian Influence

Quite frequently, critics reduce the work of those popular English poets writing during the reign of George V to the assumption that it is nothing but nature lyrics, “pastoral effusions on the beauties of certain rural countries, or unconsidered trifles about moonlight and nightingales” (Ross vii). Robert H. Ross in *The Georgian Revolt 1910-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal* suggests that the above assumption “about the nature of Georgian poetry was ridiculously oversimplified and, in most cases, downright wrong” (vii). In addressing the polemic between these two positions it is important to keep several things in mind. One is to understand, as Ross points out, that the term “Georgian” is not used to denote a new school, but is used by Edward Marsh in the “Preface to Georgian Poetry 1911-1912” to differentiate his poetry from the poetry of the Edwardian decade which preceded it and to indicate the taking of a new and exciting path; Marsh did not claim to be the originator of this “new” poetry, nor did he claim to be the first to draw attention to it. The second idea to keep in mind is the one presented by

C.K. Stead in *The New Poetic* when he declares that “I have no wish to present any one of the Georgians as a great poet, nor to suggest that as a group they made profound discoveries in the writing of poetry. But it is important to see them clearly historically” (81). Writing in 1964, Stead argues that the

critics of the past twenty years, [have] seen the Georgians through spectacles provided for [them] by the later, more vigorous movement led by Pound and Eliot. The suggestion is that the Georgians set themselves against the natural development of modern poetry: in fact they were its precursors. (81)

Originally aligned with each other, the Modernists and the Georgians shared the desire for revolt against the sentimentalist poetry of the late nineteenth century; both movements signified a deliberate and radical break from traditional western art and culture. The Modernists, however, quickly separated from the Georgians because they perceived the Georgians as still being essentially sentimentalist and conforming to the established poetic tradition – the claim that both Stead and Ross seek to qualify.³²

Typically, the Georgians are defined by those poets who came together in Edward Marsh’s five Georgian Poetry anthologies, which were later criticized by their Modernist contemporaries as being overly sentimental, and lacking in poetic form. Historically, however, rather than being sentimentally conformist, Georgian poetry was “a revolutionary attempt to change the nature of poetry” (Moore 199); the terms “revolt,” “revival,” “new age,” and “boom in poetry” were assigned by contemporaries and critical journals rather than by the poets themselves. Ross reports that

³² For a more complete examination of Georgianism and the surrounding debate regarding the importance of the Georgian poets see C.K. Stead’s *The New Poetic* and Robert H. Ross’s *The Georgian Revolt 1910-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal*.

By tactics which shrewdly combined the right amounts of finesse and brashness, boldness and humility, art and salesmanship, Edward assured the success of *Georgian Poetry I* [...] By his artful and pre-eminently successful direction of the reception of *Georgian Poetry I*, Marsh took the first significant step toward making modern poetry popular. (105)

In terms of popularity, the sales of the Georgian Poetry anthologies are a telling marker:

Marsh estimated in 1939 that in the final reckoning *Georgian Poetry I* sold 15,000 copies. *Georgian Poetry II*, published in November, 1915, was even more successful: it sold 19,000 copies. (105)

Hence, while the terms “revolutionary” or “revolt” may, perhaps, be too strong to append to the Georgian movement retrospectively, the movement’s popularity is an established fact, as is its importance as a precursor to modernist poetics.

Concerning the Georgian poetic, Myron Simon in “The Georgian Poetic” states that the founders of “Georgian poetry were Cambridge men whose religious views were agnostic, whose political views were liberal, whose literary views were anti-Victorian, and whose basic intellectual orientation derived from [Bertrand] Russell and [G.E.] Moore” (125). Furthermore, “although [the Georgians were] widely dispersed and variously occupied, they were all possessed by a desire to report experience faithfully; they were all unwilling to subordinate poetry to any other purpose” (126). Georgians envisioned a place “where they felt they could deal most honestly and truthfully with those quintessential features of human experience that only art can adequately apprehend” (Moore 128). Broadening an account of the Georgian poetic, Myron Simon states that what the Georgians shared was “a distaste for the public manner – the empty rhetoric – of much late Victorian ‘improving poetry’” (126) and that the Marsh circle “perceived with displeasure that genuine poetry had been counterfeited, [and] had been replaced with formulas that ensured public approval” (127). In Simon’s summation, the

“Georgians were in protest against forms of thought and expression – encrusted and embellished – within which the essential truths of human experience could not be told, but which committed the poet, rather, to the utterance of those pronouncements which the public wished to hear” (127). L. Hugh Moore in “Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian Realism” suggests that “the poet, unhampered by state conventions and confining poetic traditions, should strive, above all else, for sincerity, vitality, and truth by reproducing honestly and faithfully what he saw and felt” (200). The common denominator in Georgianism is the quality of realism that they tried so hard to attain. Yet to distil the Georgian philosophy are the following tenets under the umbrella of realism:

- [1] Verisimilitude
- [2] Common speech
- [3] The truth of violence and ugliness
- [4] Coarseness, brutality, and directness
- [5] A-historicism
- [6] An abundance of physical detail

Similarly, Trower’s poetic is one with its roots placed firmly in experience and realism, exhibiting to various degrees the above tenets of Georgian poetry. Reminiscent of the Georgians, he is possessed by a desire to “report experience faithfully” and honestly, unwilling to subordinate poetry to any other purpose. As Patrick Lane remarks in the Toronto *Globe and Mail*, “both Al Purdy and I always acknowledged the huge level of talent and the debt that is owed to the man [Trower],” and he suggests that one reason for the lack of attention could be that although “Trower has been writing for about 50 years and over 30 years as a serious writer and poet...the body of his work has focused mainly on work and the people who do hard labour. This is a world that the so-called establishment and intellectuals have no idea about and likely little interest in – but

he is writing about the common man, about love and sex and death. Terrific stories. Beautiful poetry” (in Eke R03). Lane recognizes the power of Trower’s poetic; his words denoting a complex, beautiful poetic of love, sex, death and common humanity, rooted in experience.

Trower’s poem “Not-So-Still Life with Damp Beer Tables” exhibits an acute sense of verisimilitude, the truth of violence and ugliness, and the qualities of coarseness, brutality and directness. Indeed, it is similar in poetic technique and in subject to the Georgian poem “Mental Cases” by Wilfred Owen. In “Mental Cases” the full brutality, honesty, and violence of the Georgian poetic is present with the description of how the patient’s “eyeballs shrink tormented / Back into their brains, because on their sense / Sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black; / Dawn breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh” (121). In contrast, the violence of “Not-So-Still Life with Damp Beer Tables” is subdued in its description – in some sense more Imagist than Georgian, yet is vivid as a result of its verisimilitude. The title of the poem itself cues the reader to several ideas. One is that of art, Trower playing against the convention of “still life” artistry to instead suggest an atmosphere of swaying movement and inebriation – “Not-so-Still” – in a gloomy, dirty, bar-room of ill repute as signified by “Damp Beer Tables.” Directly and brutally Trower elevates the mundane to the profound in order to capture the verisimilitude of a particular moment in time:

We were sitting with the madgirl
on New Year’s Eve
or the day after
and there wasn’t much
rhyme or reason to it (*Haunted* 66)

In this first stanza Trower telescopes his reader directly into his poem through the present tense of “sitting,” and thus the “we” of the first line expands to incorporate the reader who then joins the “madgirl” at the table. Rather than romanticize the moment or attempt to transport it into some pastoral realm of poetry, Trower opts for verisimilitude and adeptly portrays the futility, discord, and instability of this moment at the damp beer table. New Year’s Eve, signifier of the celebration of life, rebirth, goals, and beginnings, has ceased to be relevant; it cannot even be solidified as the day on which this particular event takes place – there is no longer any “rhyme and or reason” to life, only instability, drunkenness, and chaos. The first character in the poem is named the “madgirl”:

She said:
“I got wrists
like anyone else, see?”
and she showed them to me.

There were five white worms
across one
and three
across the other (66)

The “madgirl,” brazenly flaunting the scars on her wrists, represents true experience as the Georgians envisioned, a place “where they felt they could deal most honestly and truthfully with those quintessential features of human experience that only art can adequately apprehend” – in this case the feature of depression or mental instability leading to self mutilation or suicide. Trower’s success comes from the fact that his poems do not seek to exclude coarse or violent subjects; in fact, it is these subjects which come alive in Trower’s verse; they are celebrated as valuable and necessary aspects of humanity which ought to be explored. Thus, in “Not-so-Still Life” he uses common language to deal directly and brutally with the subject of a damaged human being.

Yet the moment of reality and humanity Trower seeks to illuminate is not complete. It is not simply the damaged human that Trower has as his subject, but the entire atmosphere and process of damaged humanity. The world he paints in words is one of back alleys, dirt, and dismay; it is not one composed of solitary beings without relation to one another, but one of a complex network of interrelations. Thus, the madgirl reaches out to the narrator for some unknown purpose:

She said:
“You’re supposed to be a poet,
baby.
What do you think of those poems?”

I said:
“Those are the saddest poems
I’ve ever read,”
and watched my buddy, bleak boy,
screwing her with his eyes (66)

Paul Vermeersch suggests in the Toronto *Globe and Mail* that “she's confrontational: ‘What do you think of those poems?’ She is flirtatious, craves attention, calls the narrator ‘baby.’ Trower has given us the minimum needed to understand her, yet the portrait feels so complete” (D14). About the bleak boy Vermeersch states

he says nothing and stares. Introverted and lonely, bleak boy doesn't enjoy the attention of many women, as evidenced by the fact that the mad girl is focusing all of hers on the narrator, and further by his own intense sexual gaze. Our deductions lead us to believe he is unattractive, awkward or otherwise invisible, and probably frustrated by it, but lacks the graces to do anything about it. (D14)

The bleak boy too has been damaged in some way. Though the particulars of the poem can be discerned in the manner Vermeersch expertly uses, they are ultimately unnecessary to the success of the poem. The power of a poem such as this is its literal truthfulness, its matter of fact description inclusive of the brutality, coarseness and

directness of the world Trower is delineating; his mythology is one of reality where time, life, and celebration are incidental to survival, social interrelations, and belonging; he combines all of these things with the vernacular to impose a sense of verisimilitude on the reader. It is this moment of experience which expands to become a quintessential feature of human existence that Trower is interested in and successfully captures.

Another embodiment of several tenets of the Georgian poetic is Edwin Muir's "The Difficult Land," which immediately imposes a sense of verisimilitude through its use of common speech and detail to evoke imagery of the seasons:

This is a difficult land. Here things miscarry
Whether we care, or do not care enough.
The grain may pine, the harlot weed grow haughty,
Sun, rain, and frost alike conspire against us:
You'd think there was malice in the very air (237).

Personified, the haughty weed, and the conspiring elements instantaneously suggest desolation with little of the coercive rhetoric of formal Victorian poetry. The above stanza could easily have been an appendage to Trower's "Along Green Tunnels" where

sinewy alders thrust up from the salmonberries
growth foams across old roads like gates closing
grouse rustle secretly
slugs move like severed yellow fingers
shrinking mudpools remember the last rain
[and] sunshafts stab through the leaves (*Haunted* 49).

In effect, Trower's stanza far exceeds the physical detail of Muir's piece. Muir's initial judgment in the first line that "this is a difficult land" implies a persona that is doing the judging. He then deliberately evokes the reader in this persona through the use of the pronouns "we" and "you." These inclusive pronouns indicate a sense of community. Thus the effect is that both the narrative persona and the reader are positioned within a

community of sorts above the scene, looking down at it from a macrocosmic vantage point. In contrast, Trower's poem, by not evoking a narrator or a persona, by using active verbs in the present tense, positions the reader on the same level as the scene, isolated and able to view it in microcosmic detail. Hence the slugs, the alders, the salmonberries, the mudpools, and the sunshafts are all visible, and can accurately create a sense of verisimilitude. If, as Simon suggests, "the Georgian poet was advised to keep his eye upon the object itself to maintain direct contact with experience" (130), then Trower seems to have succeeded to a greater degree than Edwin Muir. Indeed, the dissimilarities of these poems negate any true comparison and are indicative of Trower's movement beyond the Georgian poetic.

Returning to this poetic, Simon states that Georgian poetry went beyond "faithful reports to the discrimination of essential details" (132), and manifested an "interest in nature, in the rhythm of the seasons, in love and birth and death, in the enigmas of personality, in the dependably certain and the dependably uncertain" (132). Similarly, Trower's interest in what we might call the pastoral of logging is not a flight from reality into sentimentalism, but rather a component of this particular form of realism. Even a cursory survey of the titles Trower uses yields insight into his subject matter: "The Alders," "The Animals," "Goliath Country," "Garden Music," "The Ghosts," "Grease for the Wheels of Winter," and "The Last Spar-Tree on Elephantine Mountain." Titles such as these resonate with the Georgian interest in nature and the rhythms of the seasons. Poems such as the "Marble Arch" evoke both the dependably certain and the dependably uncertain as the narrator locates himself "two decades later in the same / room where I tried to kill myself / before caution was invented" (86). Here the narrator is uncertain,

will always be uncertain when confronting the amorphous memories of the past; “Familiar ghosts” (86) will always “slip unsummoned from the walls” (86). The narrator slips into memory, proclaiming “I’m always twenty here / popping caps from new bottles, / indulging timeworn vices” (86), thus signalling his inebriated transportation into the essence of a past moment, using the detail of memory to recreate the past. Yet all is not uncertain. As the narrator slips further into his inebriated reverie “the new décor reverts / to its shabby oldtime look” (86); he is called back to the dependable certainty of immediate reality and reflects that “here where a window called my foolish bluff / I talk abstractedly with phantoms” (87). The external reality, passing by the window, interrupts the essence of the narrator’s moment with dependable certainty. The scene simultaneously celebrates the youthful joy and fervour of the moment, while intimating the sadness and sorrow for the loss of the moment without the desire to reclaim it. Trower is able to position his narrator in a way that portrays the essential sadness and nostalgia of the moment while not attempting a return to it. It is in the savouring of both the moment itself as it occurred in the past, as well as the lamentary feeling that the moment now contains, that Trower’s poetry is most powerful.

The Tears in Things

Taking the Georgian poetic of directness, coarseness, brutality and experience to heart, Trower develops a poetic which integrates with these qualities the subject of darkness, loss, and absence; he evokes in his poetry the sadness that Virgil phrased *lacrimae rerum*, the tears in things. Yet, Trower’s poetry often travels further than the subjects of darkness, loss, and absence; in his poems these subjects do not engender further sorrow,

empathy, sympathy or pity as expected. Rather, Trower's purpose in addressing these subjects seems to be to relate them in a matter-of-fact, direct manner, and thus render obsolete the traditional negative valuations associated with these emotions. What is left is the recognition that these emotions can be positive; they can be seen as necessary experiences of life; they become an important part of what it means to be human in Trower's terms, and in some sense must, therefore, be esteemed. Thus, the lyrical, ballad-like poetry that Trower frequently uses becomes double edged, conflated with an elegiac undercurrent.

Darkness and death are common subjects in Trower's poetry as he explores the moments of experience where individuals are faced with the reality of the ugliness and fear life often contains. In poems such as "Deep Places; Dark Places" the darkness resides in the subconscious world of nightmare and dream:

In the fist of the nightmare
the phantoms of my worst imaginings
taunt me with humourless laughter –
twisted implacable faces
leer at me in the ominous court of Kafkaesque injustice
where they are passing an unthinkable sentence on me
for unknown crimes (*There Are Many Ways* 64)

Trower places his reader in the recognizable moment of a terrifying nightmare by substituting the expected "fit" with the term "fist;" every muscle is clenched – the mind is gripped tightly without hope for escape. The "unthinkable sentence" is both terrifying because of its implied unmentionability due to its possible grotesqueness or horrific nature – so terrible that convention precludes its mention, but also because of the myriad possibilities the mind may imaginatively supply as a "sentence" within the dream. The unknown is, perhaps, more terrifying than anything solidified in language or thought. On

another level, Trower is allowing the mind of the reader, too, to enter into the “nightmare” by forcing the reader to imaginatively speculate as to the unknown punishment and for the unknown crimes committed.

In the second stanza of the poem the narrator begins to wake up from the nightmare only to find the terror filled atmosphere of initial wakefulness – still somewhat present in the dream:

only I'm not awake
but trapped in the skewed and sinister
room-that-is-not-the-room
where every creak and rustle
is fraught with festering terror –
where the cat is a hissing demon
and grubwhite fingers claw
at me from the couchback (64)

Trower moves in this second stanza from the description of a nightmare to a comment on the idiosyncratic nature of humanity. Although there is in wakefulness the recognition of the event of the nightmare, this fact does not dispel its power. The narrator remains in the “fist” of the nightmare and aptly demonstrates the power that imagination has over logic and reality.³³ It is not until the third stanza that the poem moves to the level of wakefulness as the narrator utters:

but I break through at last
to the dubious safety of the surface
lie there damply quivering –
knowing that one of these nasty nights
I'm not going to make it (65)

³³ This tension between logic and science on one hand and imagination or fantasy on the other is a common theme in Trower's poetry, but one which will not be explored for reasons of brevity.

Progressing from a world of nightmare and unreality in the first stanza, to semi-wakefulness in the second, to complete wakefulness in the third, Trower structurally mimics the movement between layers of consciousness. Concurrently, as the poem progresses it changes from addressing the nature of a nightmare, to the nature of human imagination, to the human condition. It is not until the third stanza that there is a suggestion of instability regarding the narrator. Until that point, all terror or darkness can be attributed to the dream, yet in the final two lines of the poem there is the suggestion that something is awry, that perhaps the narrator was in the “fist” of an alcohol or drug induced dream as signified by the damp quivering and the fact that next time the narrator may not “make it.” Whether the last line indicates “making it” out of the nightmare, or the onset of death is left up to the reader, the phrase could equally denote a complete descent into madness – possibly the result of chemical imbalance –, or the approach of death. In an expert manipulation of language Trower leaves the meaning of the last line unknown, again impinging on the imagination of the reader and slipping into a commentary on dream and terror similar to the “unknowing” in the first stanza.

Yet despite the semantic content of the poem, Trower nowhere assigns the experience a negative valuation. It is clearly an experience of fear and darkness, and is possibly a contemplation of madness and death; yet, the poem is neither indicative of regret, nor does it engender sorrow, pity, or sympathy. Structurally, Trower achieves this initially through the creation of distance between the experience and the reader by having the narrator describe “phantoms of *my* worst imaginings” [my emphasis]. The pronoun “my” grammatically initiates a relationship of ownership between the narrator and the experience, and thereby distances the reader. The reader, then, is always at one remove

from the experience, and hence is unable to assign it a subjective negative valuation. Further, the actions of the narrator are described with active verbs of empowerment: “I scream,” “I spit,” “I fight,” “I break.” The narrator, though in the “fist” of the nightmare, is also always in a position to exert power, and ultimately does succeed in breaking free of the dream. Yet, it is what is missing from the poem that causes Trower’s success in the task of rendering the experience in the poem unable to engender pity or sympathy for the narrator. Absent in the poem are emotional adjectives appended to the pronoun “I” which would logically place the narrator in a position of victimization. With the exception of the damp quivering in the last stanza, the narrator is never described in terms of physical or emotional damage resulting from the experience. Even the damp quivering is open to interpretation – relief, excitement, fear, chemically induced – there is no certainty, and thus no concrete reason to ascribe pity, sympathy, or other stereotypically negative valuations to the event and narrator of the poem. Trower relates the experience in this way in order to attempt a semantic change or addition to the typically negative signifiers and semantic meanings of qualities such as darkness, fear, loss and sorrow. His matter-of-fact style instead causes the reader to accept the experience he relates as, at least to some extent, value-neutral, or a positive component of the accretion of experience that is necessary to be human in Trower’s terms.

Similar in technique, but different in subject, is the poem “The Falling Away.”

The poem opens with an existential moment of simile and metaphor, closing with a movement into loss:

The tree ruffles its feathers like a bird
in suburbia The game’s over –
a dance that was doomed before it began
I am thinking of love falling away (*There Are* 97)

The ruffling leaves of the tree operate on one level to suggest defence or irritation at the approaching season, but also signify the continuance of mundane and banal occurrences despite the seeming dismay of the narrator. This juxtaposition of the existential operation of daily life against the personal thoughts and strife of the narrator continues throughout the poem:

Nothing dies quicker than heady delusion –
it flames on blue days then falls away
I watch wet laundry dance in the wind
I drink red bloody wine and think of you

You are gone beyond my foolish deceits
caught in the pull of your own needs and trades
The mountains rear far and cold in the distance
cynically white as wedding cakes

It's a good gusty day, I suppose
for weatherwatchers and little old ladies
but somewhere within me the rain falls hard
and where you laughed is a rift in reality (97)

It is through the juxtaposition of the mundane, daily activities of life against the personal loss and sorrow of the narrator that Trower transforms what could be a poem entirely about loss and sorrow to one which couples these emotions with positive valuations. In the second stanza the “wet laundry” and the action of drinking wine is conflated with the contemplation of the loss of love; in the third it is the “needs and trades” of the beloved against the distant mountains, while in the final stanza it is the gusty day and the “little old ladies.” What saves the poem from being solely a lament or elegy is this juxtaposition, and with it the suggestion that the poem is a stream of consciousness account of the narrator. As the narrator contemplates the falling away of love, thoughts of the scene in front of him intrude into and become influenced by his reverie. Visually, the

narrator's thoughts are initially interrupted by the leaves of the tree in the suburb where this event takes place. As the reverie continues to slide back to its subject of love at the end of the first stanza and the beginning of the second, the narrator is again distracted, this time by the sight and sound of the wet laundry drying in the wind. This occurs again in the third stanza as the narrator gazes at the far and distant mountains, which, in turn, are transformed into cynical wedding cakes. Yet the cynicism is not allowed to continue, the strain of thought fragments to declare "It's a gusty good day, I suppose / for weatherwatchers and little old ladies" – either of which category could include the narrator. The thoughts of the narrator fluctuate between sorrow, loss and regularity; they drift inward and outward with predictable rhythm. The last two lines, therefore, do not fall as hard as they might. Though the "rain falls" hard inside the narrator, and a void or "rift" has taken the place of love, the loss is not a consuming one. Trower allows the narrator to feel the loss – drinking "red bloody wine" and thinking of love –, as well as the accompanying cynicism, but Trower does not allow the narrator to wallow in the sorrow; he does not allow the atmosphere of the poem to become saturated with a sense of ultimate loss, and does not allow the poem to degrade into sentimental doggerel. The loss has already been subsumed into the experience of the narrator; its omnipresence is simply a commentary on the negativity of the post-romantic view or belief that emotions such as pain or loss are meant to dissipate completely in order for healing to occur. The juxtaposition of the mundane with the personal, in tandem with the stream of consciousness effect of the poem, signals that the loss is omnipresent even in the face of regularity, but that this is a fact, and it should be assigned a positive valuation rather than

seen as negative. Indeed, the narrator has survived the loss and is cognizant of the surrounding beauty of the rustling trees and dancing laundry, despite the void within.

Loss and absence characterize Trower's poetry, a poetry based directly on his personal experiences. Unique about Trower's exploration of these qualities is how he writes about non-traditional subject matter; he examines the characters other poets ignore, and always present is the undercurrent of *lacrimae rerum*, the tears in things, the tears shed for the sorrows of man. Perhaps the most poignant of Trower's poems in this regard is "The Popcorn Man," a poem based on a recognizable figure to those who lived in or visited English Bay in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada while he was alive:

All summer sad he stood
by English Bay with a glass barrow
counting his slow regrets.
Heat crept and slid in the greasy streets;
he grew there quite as a tree.
Children buzzed him like gnats (*Haunted* 46)

Here we are immediately presented with the fact that this figure – whose name remains unknown – is unhappy. The alliteration of "summer" with "sad" and "stood" as well as the substitution of the word "sad" for the expected "long" directs attention specifically to the utter sadness of this man, though the cause or motive for such sadness remains elusive. What the narrator does tell his reader, is that the man either coming to, or in the continual process of, realisation. He is "counting his slow regrets," regrets only now coming to fruition. We also learn that that the popcorn man has been in this place for a long time, growing there "quiet as a tree"; the children buzz him, not with curiosity as they would something different or new, but with irritation and annoyance like "gnats." In the second stanza not much more is learned:

If he'd had a barrel organ, a monkey,
he might have made music
instead of hollow buttered fluff
but he made no music – few words –
a handful of dime-at-a-time dollars.
The stray dogs nipped at his cuffs (46)

In this stanza the popcorn man is revealed to be a man of little talent, and little money; he is unable to do anything other than produce “hollow buttered fluff” – a product devoid of nutritional value, consumed for purely pleasurable reasons. The fact that “he made no music,” coupled with the production of “hollow buttered fluff,” signifies the futility of the man’s job and the redundancy of his role in life. The stanza suggests that he is not only unable to provide for himself monetarily, but is likewise unable to generate happiness for either himself or those who surround him; he produces nothing of value, even the dogs are described as nipping at his cuffs rather than scouring for popcorn remnants and spill-over.

Trower is masterfully taking the figure of a man – likely an individual who has become present to the point of invisibility on the streets he inhabits – and, surrounding him with a story, he searches out his humanity, that quality of sadness that is seemingly inherent in his existence. The description of the man in the first two stanzas leaves the reader searching for some form of happiness in regard to this figure rather than leaving him a man who seems to be more fixture than human. Yet the third stanza does little to alleviate this tension:

A tall brown ghost of a man
burred somehow like a faded photograph
he haunted the boardwalk.
At night or in rainy weather
he haunted the room across the hall.
Once we talked (46)

Indeed, the third stanza further positions the man as two dimensional, more akin to a photograph than a human being. The popcorn man seems to be almost concave in meaning; he is almost a void which the reader hopes and anticipates will be filled in by the fourth stanza as indicated by the suspenseful close of the third:

The loneliness broke free from him like moths
the solemn voice scratched painful memory
from griefdusty grooves:
the war wound the stolen wife the coal mines
the heart attacks the doctor's stern edict.
His words fell down the air like dead leaves (46)

This is the most information we ever receive about the popcorn man, yet it is curiously devoid of detail and emotion. The suspense created by "once we talked" seemed to indicate an imminent revelation or confession of sorts; some vital piece of information that would humanize the two dimensional figure of the popcorn man. Instead the stanza is bereft of emotional descriptors; the reader is presented with the events of the life of the popcorn man, but the context, sentiment, and passion remain absent. The repetition of the article "the," each repetition followed by an occurrence in the man's life, is suggestive of redundancy or cliché and undermines the emotional impact of the lines.

The role of the narrator in the poem has been one of silent observer and listener; the presence, attitude and judgements of the narrator are implicit rather than explicit. In the fifth stanza, however, the narration of the life of the popcorn man abruptly breaks off to introduce the explicit presence and character of the narrator, not as an impartial observer, but as an equal of sorts to the popcorn man:

Three wasted winelost days later
I returned from sodden odysseys.

His door was ajar –
it was out of keeping with his habits
(he was private as a spider) –
I dared my head round the door (47)

The narrator is careless or candid enough to intimate his potential for a flawed vision of the popcorn man due to his alcohol problem, and possibly inebriated state. The clichéd listing of travails and tribulations in the fourth stanza could as easily and equally be appended to the narrator. Yet the observational character of the narrator is maintained by the knowledge that he observes to the extent that he has become intimately familiar with the habits of the popcorn man. There is an inkling of the voyeur-poet here with the revelation that the narrator is familiar with both the private nature of the popcorn man, and his habit of keeping the door closed. Although this stanza is useful in locating the narrator as a figure somewhat equal in social position to the popcorn man, it is in the next stanza that the reader discovers the literal reason behind the shift from description of the popcorn man to the narrator's direct experience:

He lay naked facing the wallpaper
at least two days reprieved from agony
half his body blue as the sky
as razor blades
as the sea he never swam in or sailed
only watched sometimes with remote yearning eyes (47)

There is no shock, anger, dismay, sorrow or fear upon the discovery of the body of the popcorn man; once again, emotion and context are virtually absent from the description. Again altering a common or expected maxim, the narrator described the popcorn man as “two days reprieved” rather than “two days dead.” This draws attention to the fact that rather than being provoked into negative valuations deriving from the life and death of the popcorn man, the narrator is provoked into contemplation, acceptance and metaphor.

In elegiac style the poem closes with the burial of the popcorn man:

They buried him in Potter's Field
I stayed on in that musty roominghouse –
there was no need to be afraid.
Not of Jake, the lost popcorn man –
he'd had a bellyful of haunting.
He took his ghost with him when he died (47)

Though the poem closes as it opens – with the absence of particular emotion, I do not mean to suggest that emotion itself is absent. Clearly, Trower has imbued his subject, his poem, with a sense of *lacrimae rerum*. The poem elegizes and sheds tears for a life lived in relative anonymity. Paradoxically, the man's life is one of futility, but also one of value. What Trower does is explore this quality of *lacrimae rerum* while intentionally eliminating an overabundance of sentimentality, and in doing so, also eliminates the language that is most likely to engender negative valuations such as pity, fear, and sympathy for their own sake or as directed toward the subject of the poem: the popcorn man; directed in such a way they would only further his futility and redundancy. Instead, by eliminating the context, the sentiment, and the emotion, Trower's use of language still generates a sense of sorrow, but it simultaneously generates the response that this quality has positive value in and of itself. It should be esteemed, and positively affirmed rather than denied.

The moments of life, of sorrow, darkness, of loss, are expressed and explored in Trower's poetry through the examination of what Lane terms the "world that the so-called establishment and intellectuals have no idea about and likely little interest in – but he is writing about the common man, about love and sex and death" or what John Mackie in the *Vancouver Sun* describes as the world of "logging camps, seamy bars, and benders,

of boozers, losers and junkies,” describing Trower himself as “poet laureate of the underclass” (B2). Yet Mackie misunderstands Trower’s poetry. There are no “junkies,” or “losers” in Trower’s poetry, nor is there an “underclass” – politicized and prejudicial terms rife with dehumanizing and negative moral valuations. In their place are experiences and moments told in a direct, sometimes coarse and vulgar, but nonetheless beautiful style. Trower ascribes the human to those such as the popcorn man, the dreamer, or the lover, who are othered by society, who are either dehumanized or somehow damaged. He searches out the moments of darkness, loss, absence and sadness that deconstruct boundaries, and are common to general experience rather than ephemeral or transient particulars. Above all, however, his poetry takes the typically negative associations of these qualities, of these moments and figures, and through language assigns them their own independence as positive valuations in place of the negative.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONSTRUCTIONS OF MASCULINITY IN THE POETRY OF PETER TROWER

“Books [and Histories] about men are not about men as men. These books do not explore how the experience of being a man structured the men’s lives, or the organizations and institutions they created, the events in which they participated. American men have no history as gendered selves; no work describes historical events in terms of what these events meant to the men who participated in them as men”

– Michael S. Kimmel, *The History of Men, Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*.³⁴

The above quotation, equally applicable to the construction of masculinity in Canada, is crucial in understanding what is at stake in the discipline of masculinity studies. What Kimmel is referring to is the fact that while historical accounts may be written by men and may have the accomplishments and exploits of men as their subject matter – thus perpetuating the normative notion of hegemonic patriarchal systemic masculinity – these accounts do not reveal how masculinity is constructed. As Robyn Wiegman suggests in “Unmaking: Men and Masculinity in Feminist Theory,”

By collapsing men and masculinity into a generalized category of man and wedding that generalization to the organizational practices and privileges of patriarchy, much feminist critical analysis relied on what seemed to many scholars and activists an unproblematic linkage between maleness, masculinity, and the social order of masculine supremacy (34)

³⁴ p.3

The history of masculinity as it is described by Kimmel, in conjunction with the practice described by Wiegman, renders the construction of masculinities³⁵ invisible, and thereby also renders systemic, hegemonic masculinity natural and seemingly beyond interrogation. Indeed, this is precisely why, as Kimmel again suggests, “real men don’t study gender” (in Brod 161), and why “for a man to admit that he has questions about masculinity is already to admit that he has failed at masculinity” (Brod 162). With the naturalized and invisible marriage of “maleness, masculinity, and the social order of masculine supremacy,” masculinity, and the construction thereof, becomes ostensibly unquestionable, and thus also the most dangerous, threatening, and damaging to those who attempt its interrogation. On one hand, a naturalized concept of hegemonic masculinity leads to its perpetuation, and on the other, threats to this construction of masculinity can give rise to defensive behaviour in the form of aggression and the entrenchment of power positions.

Contemporary criticism in the field of feminist theory and gender studies recognizes that “a body of male criticism supportive of the feminist project *is* beginning to develop...[and is of] the kind that analyzes male power, [and] male hegemony, with a concern for the effects of this power *on the female subject...*” (Modleski 7). Further, contemporary critics recognize both that “masculinity too [in addition to femininity], is a gender and therefore that men as well as women have undergone historical and cultural processes of gender formation that distribute power and privilege unevenly” (Gardiner 11), and that “masculinity is not monolithic, not one static thing, but the confluence of

³⁵ I use the plural to make explicit the fact that there is no single, all encompassing concept of “masculinity.”

multiple processes and relationships with variable results for differing individuals, groups, institutions and societies” (Gardiner 11).

Given this dynamic and variable nature of masculinity, much work has been done to investigate the historical processes, institutions, groups, and societies that construct these masculinities. Predominantly, this type of criticism investigates the construction of masculinity as it occurs in male-dominated sectors of the workforce in the United States, in social events that “celebrate” stereotypical masculinity, and in the frontier literature and mythology of the United States. These sites of interrogation give rise to such articles as “Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960,”³⁶ “Masculinity, the Auto Racing Fraternity, and the Technological Sublime: The Pit Stop As a Celebration of Social Roles,”³⁷ “The Cult of Masculinity: American Social Character and the Legacy of the Cowboy,”³⁸ and a plethora of articles regarding masculinity in corporate culture. The common denominator for many of these articles is that they all, explicitly or implicitly, refer to masculine culture in the United States, yet often, despite the site of the interrogation, the insights yielded hold true for masculinity in general. Thus, although the focus is on the stereotypical male of the United States, this does not negate the significance or relevance of the criticism. In fact, articles such as Nancy Quam-Wickham’s “Rereading Man’s Conquest of Nature: Skill, Myths and the Historical Construction of Masculinity in Western Extraction Industries”³⁹ are equally applicable to the masculine culture present in Canada’s resource industries. Here British

³⁶ By Stephen Meyer in Roger Horowitz’s collection, *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*.

³⁷ By Ben A. Shakleford in *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*.

³⁸ Michael S. Kimmel. *The History of Men, Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*.

³⁹ In *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*.

Columbia is of particular importance, its role in the development, extraction, and exportation of natural resources such as forestry aiding Canada in becoming one of the world's top trading partners in the twentieth century.⁴⁰ Yet despite this fact, the logging and forestry industry is one which has largely been ignored in terms of gender criticism – this in spite of the fact that logging, being predominantly a male-dominated industry, is a particularly illustrative and productive site for the analysis of masculine culture.

It is in capturing the masculine culture of logging as a whole, of British Columbia in particular, that the poetry of Peter Trower is especially productive. In the previous chapter I have demonstrated how Trower is situated within various literary traditions which originated in England and in various ways infused the poetry of Canada and British Columbia. These traditions, however, are also gendered; the world of logging examined in chapter two as well as the literary movements described in chapter three are predominantly male-dominated – at least in their relevance to the poetry of Trower. Thus, the poetry that Trower writes, situated in these masculine literary traditions and based on over twenty years in the logging industry, is an excellent vehicle for the illustration of how masculinity was constructed in the woods, and how it fluctuated and altered as loggers cycled between the woods and the city. Concurrently, Trower's poetry foregrounds the fact that even in a male-dominated sector of the economy such as logging, masculinity cannot be reduced to a single, uniform, all inclusive definition. In examining Trower's poetry through the lens of masculinity studies, I will break my analysis into three sections. The first section will examine how the male-dominated industry of logging operated in terms of the construction of systemic, hegemonic

⁴⁰ See chapter two for a more complete explanation of the British Columbia resource economy.

masculinity. The second section will examine how masculinity is constructed in the city, how its manifestations alter and fluctuate in an urban environment with the presence of women. Here I will draw on René Girard's *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel* as well as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Between Men, English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* to serve as the basis of my theoretical framework. The third section will briefly examine what is at stake in constructions of masculinity and examine how Trower's poetry reflects modern conceptions of varied and multiple masculinities that break free from that formulation wedded to maleness and male hegemony – in other words how Trower's poetry reflects the general inadequacy, and contests the “standard normative” view, of hegemonic masculinity to reflect more contemporary concerns.

Masculinity in the Woods

The first step in examining Trower's poetry as reflective of the “standard normative” view of hegemonic masculinity is to briefly describe the category itself. Carrigan et al., in “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity,” quote from Patricia Sexton's *The Feminized Male* in answer to the question of what it means to be male:

...obviously, holding male values and following male behaviour norms... such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body. (104)

Carrigan et al. further suggest that for early sex role theorists “hegemonic masculinity is the true nature of men” (106). Later theorists, notably those involved with the gay liberation movement of the 1970s, argued the important concept of

hegemonic masculinity, not as the “the male role,” but as a particular variety of masculinity to which others – among them young and effeminate as well as homosexual men – are subordinated. It is particular groups of men, not men in general, who are oppressed within patriarchal sexual relations, and whose situations are related in different ways to the overall logic of the subordination of women to men (110)

In a summary of their sociology of masculinity Carrigan et al. “see social definitions of masculinity as being embedded in the dynamics of institutions – the working of the state, of corporations, of unions, of families – quite as much as in the personality of individuals” (112).

I would suggest that the picture of logging life as expressed by Trower’s poetry fits nicely into the preceding statements on masculinity. Further, I suggest that on one level, the social definition of masculinity as embedded in the social network and institution of the logging industry is one which involves the construction of masculinity precisely on the level of hegemony as outlined above. In other words, logging represents the paradigmatic situation of “material conditions reforc[ing] prevailing gender ideologies” (Quam-Wickam 94). The construction of masculinity in the logging industry is predominantly a public construct in which individuals situate themselves in terms of a masculine ideal structured by a complex intermingling of conditions and characteristics such as skill, hierarchical structures, the embodiment of violence, public speech acts, and mythmaking.

Nancy Quam-Wickam in “Rereading Man’s Conquest of Nature: Skill, Myths, and the Historical Construction of Masculinity in Western Extractive Industries” suggests that “workers in western extractive industries culturally constructed a ‘masculine ideal,’ the defining qualities of which were brotherhood, solidarity, and a pride in the acquisition

of skill” (92). Further, as a “social concept, skill served as the most important component of workers’ culture in the West’s dark mining shafts, damp forests of redwood and Douglas fir, and dusty oil fields, and it contributed to workers’ ideas about manhood and class pride” (92). Indeed, skill was permanently on display in logging, constantly being negotiated and renegotiated through comparison, confrontation, and acquired experience. On one level the tasks of logging themselves imply considerable skill, a lack of skill often resulting in mortal consequences. Trower’s *Chainsaws in the Cathedral* tells of loggers who stagger “up muddy hills of rain” (20) while “uncoiling...a heavy noose of wire”(20), who raise spar-trees, who “wrestled with their steel ropes” (38), and who “throttled logs” (120), amidst the growl of powersaws, the shrapnel of breaking blocks, dynamite which made “the earth vomit boulders” (91), as well as amidst the natural elements of fire, snow, sleet, and rain. Yet Trower does more than simply chronicle the arduous and dangerous lifestyle of logging; he positions a speaker in his poetry which, in turn, causes the narratives of men in the woods to become speech acts. The saying of something is also the doing of something – in this case the construction of masculinity.

Consider the following passage from “Running Scared with the Sky-Hanger”:

Bill, you old sky-hanger,
rigging a tree once, so thumping drunk
you didn’t remember doing it
monkeying that stick by sheer
subliminal savvy (*Haunted* 58)

Here, Trower not only captures the skill implicit in the act of rigging the tree, but also expresses the double-edged attitude toward skill that was essential to the construction of masculinity. On one level, skill is celebrated as a necessary component of masculinity; the mastery and physical prowess necessary in the act of rigging is lauded by the narrator

in a public invocation of these qualities as indicated by “subliminal savvy,” Trower once again using the ballad form to great effect. On another level, the act that the sky-hanger has performed is diminished and downplayed, but in the diminishing he is actually elevated in terms of his masculinity. That is, the skill inherent in the act of the sky-hanger is diminished by the description of his inebriated state, yet simultaneously his masculine character is elevated both because of the “manliness” associated with drunkenness, and because of the amplified skill necessary to perform the “rigging” in an inebriated state. The ballad form of the poem indicates that the narrative of Bill is one which has been told and retold, the poem itself a part of the re-telling process. Thus, the public narration of Bill’s exploits executes a speech act insofar as it “does” the construction of his masculinity.

While Stephen Meyer’s “Work, Play, and Power: Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960” is focused on the male culture of the shop floor, his analysis of the male-dominated environment in terms of the construction of masculinity is equally applicable to the situation in the logging industry. Meyer develops a divide between “rough” and “respectable” manhood which, although overly simplistic, is useful for analysis purposes. The “rough” category is described as being comprised of communities of crude, unskilled workers characterized by

religious and ethnic identity, vice and violence, alcohol and drinking, brawling and roughhousing, physical prowess and risk-taking, sport and gambling, female dependency and subordination, and a belief in strong egalitarianism coupled with an opposition to employers. (15)⁴¹

⁴¹ Meyer also describes these types as constructed ideas which merged and intermingled in myriad ways. Thus, though aspects of the logging industry do fit into his definitions, clearly the lack of skill that Meyer associates with “rough” manhood is an erroneous distinction concerning logging.

The narrator of Trower's poem in the aforementioned excerpt is aligned with Meyer's "rough" category; he actively participates in the construction of the sky-hanger's masculinity by publicly uttering a claim about his skill, inebriation, and physical prowess, therefore positioning the sky-hanger firmly within the stereotypical, "standard-normative" view of hegemonic masculinity. The narrator is, in fact, doing something by saying something in terms of speech acts. With every public affirmation of stereotypical male qualities, masculinity is being negotiated and constructed.

Inherent in the necessity of *skill* as part of the construction of masculinity is the presence of hierarchical structures whereby those who lack skill, and thus are less "masculine," are effectively othered. Thus we return to the description of hegemonic masculinity, reported by Carrigan et al., as a variety of masculinity to which particular groups of men are subjugated and oppressed. Indeed, in the logging industry there is a very specific hierarchical structure from greenhorn – a new and unskilled labourer – and whistlepunk at the bottom to hooktender and side rod at the top. The individuals labelled as "greenhorn" and "whistlepunk" were subjugated by those higher up in the hierarchy,⁴² these terms reinscribing the normative view of hegemonic masculinity. In "The Lowest-Paid Job in the Woods" the narrator declares:

They call me a *whistlepunk* derisively
I must endure
the stinging tradition of their scorn
when daily I hold their lives, like mice,
at the mercy of my fingers (*Haunted* 107)

⁴² An exception would be if the term "greenhorn" is used as an adjective to downplay physical ability and skill while concurrently enhancing these same qualities as I discussed above.

In the above stanza, the last of the poem, the narrator has been subjugated as a result of both his position in the hierarchy of the logging world and as a result of the fact that he is, indeed, the “lowest paid man in the woods.” As such, his masculinity is constructed as one which has somehow failed; his position, even if a hypothetical or ideal one, as “breadwinner,” as one on whom females would be dependant on and thus subjugated by, is negated by his hierarchical position. Regardless of whether or not a particular man is married, or wants to subjugate females, what is paramount in the construction of masculinity in the woods is how an individual fits into and coheres with the *public construction* of the masculine ideal, in this case a standard normative, patriarchal hegemonic ideal. In a location where the company of peers is omnipresent – working side by side in the woods, sleeping side by side in the bunkhouses – the public construction of masculinity is the only construction; virtually all individual masculinity is suppressed by and subsumed into the ideal.

The only recourse that the whistlepunk in “The Lowest-Paid Job in the Woods” has is to find a new element of masculinity to tap into in order to elevate his status. In the poem, the whistlepunk’s masculinity, diminished by his position, is renegotiated and retained, if only in his mind, through his violent stance. His reflection that he can at any time cause the death of his fellow workers, holding “their lives, like mice, / at the mercy of” his fingers, is his attempt to cohere with the public ideal of masculinity around him. The narrator’s violent speculation occurs immediately following a daydream “of songs and stories” of the “legendary whistlepunk”

back in the Dirty Thirties
whose partner was killed on the rigging
by a production-crazy foreman –
who stayed on in camp, waited his chance

caught the foreman in the bight
blew the wrong whistle, let the logs take him
blamed a raven, sailed away (*Haunted* 107)

The above daydream facilitates the construction of the narrator's masculinity in several ways. On the surface, the obvious interpretation is that the narrator's masculinity is enhanced by its linkage with violence; yet far more powerful is the construction of his masculinity through its linkage with a pre-established legend that embodies masculine ideals. As Susan Jeffords suggests

the masculine bond...insists on a denial of difference – whether black or white, wealthy or poor, high school or college-educated, from north or south, men are the 'same' – at the same time that the bond itself depends for its existence on an affirmation of difference – men are not women (in Wiegman 41)

To qualify the above statement I suggest that the necessity of "sameness" to the masculine bond operates predominantly *within* particular social spheres and institutions, not necessarily across them. Further, I suggest that the bond itself depends on an affirmation of difference: "men are not women" is true, yet the bond equally depends on the affirmation of difference between groups of men that belong to, conform to, and perpetuate the standard normative construction of masculinity and those, such as the whistlepunk, who are subordinated to it. Hence, masculinity can be constructed by the linking of the individual to an established masculine ideal, in this case the heroic masculine figure of a legendary whistlepunk of the Dirty Thirties, and thereby negate, or at least attempt the negation of, the subordination that occurs in this case via hierarchical structures.

Another way in which masculinity is being constructed in the woods, and which is also implicit in "The Lowest-Paid Job in the Woods," is again through the adherence to a

masculine ideal of “sameness.” Here, Meyer’s description of “rough” masculinity as one which includes “a belief in strong egalitarianism coupled with an opposition to employers” (15) comes into play. Further, as Quam-Wickam suggests, “an oil worker might have to be ‘a special brand of man,’ big, rough, strong, and have experience, but he also had to engage his own class oppression by the forces of capital” (95). It is precisely these class oppressions that the whistlepunk must endure as the lowest paid individual in the hierarchical structure of logging, and only through his linkage to the “legendary whistlepunk” who enacted vengeance on the “production-crazy foreman” can his “sameness” be reconstituted and his masculinity constructed to fit into the ideal. In his attachment to the legend, the whistlepunk’s masculinity belongs to the standard normative ideal in opposition to employers and the forces of capital. In the logging industry the demand for labour was so high that a labour shortage occurred with the result that the industry was often unregulated, and even when regulations came into effect, they were difficult to enforce. Thus, masculinity was frequently constructed in opposition to the ruling class who took advantage of these conditions to oppress and exploit the working class in the interest of capital.

In the poem “Lightning Rod,” the narrator describes logging during a lightning storm:

Maybe they’ll shut her down!
shouts Johnny the chokerman, hopefully
“Maybe,” I say but I know they won’t
those wood-greedy bastards (*Chainsaws* 30)

Similar is the scene in “The Beacons of the Bad Days” where, amidst snow and cold weather, the loggers are described as “pawns of a gung-ho hooktender:”

Tin-pants Anderson, that slavedriver
urging us stubbornly on –
overdoing his job no let-up even now
Anyone human would shut her down –
slam the lid on this blizzardly valley –
not that production-crazy sonofabitch – (*Chainsaws* 36)

In both instances masculinity is depicted as being constructed through an appeal to “sameness,” an opposition to the oppression of the forces of capital which bridges across other constructions of masculinity based on conceptions of skill and hierarchy.

The difficulty in trying to describe the construction of masculinity in the world of logging as one which is standard normative and one which is solely wedded to hegemonic, systemic, conceptions of masculinity is that the construction of masculinity is not a static entity, but is dynamic, and is constantly being negotiated and renegotiated. Hence, the masculinity of a whistlepunk is subjugated by hierarchical concerns, but is reaffirmed in a position of power when in confrontation or opposition to the ruling class. Masculinity, however, is situationally defined. Neither class hierarchy nor gender solidarity consistently or uniformly dictates gender construction, but rather, either one may subjugate the other within a particular situation – as is the case with the whistlepunk. The same can be said for violence. As mentioned above in regard to the violent dream and attitude of the whistlepunk, a turn to violence can bridge other – i.e. hierarchical – constructions of masculinity and thereby re-situate the individual firmly in the standard normative masculine construction.

Suzanne E. Hatty, in *Masculinities, Violence, and Culture*, comments on the construction of masculinity regarding the cowboy and the frontiersman, but her insight is easily applicable to the lumberjack. The cowboy, frontiersman, and by extension lumberjack,

are willing to enter unknown and dangerous territory and prepare it for habitation. As he pushed forward into alien and hostile spaces, the cowboy rejected the comforts of romantic or sexual relationships. He circulated, according to the cultural documents, in an ever-onward movement and in a world of males. He was self-reliant, emotionally contained, and supportive of other men. (136)

In this process a man's body is crucial in the construction of his masculinity. Robert Connell suggests that "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies – to be inherent in a male body or to express something about a male body" (in Hatty 126). Hatty adds that "ironically, the male body is not only an instrument, but also a weapon," quoting Connell that "what it means to be masculine is quite literally, to embody force" (120). Perhaps the best way to bridge the gap between the examination of the cowboy and the above two comments about masculinity and the male body is to again quote from Hatty:

Men view aggressive or violent acts as a means to assert or maintain control over others. These violent acts are an attempt to re-affirm a positive self-concept, enhance self-esteem, and reclaim interpersonal power. They are also an attempt to pacify and tame the 'disruptive and frightening forces in the world around them' (59)

These conceptions of masculinity are clearly evident in the construction of masculinity in the logging industry. The logger, like the cowboy and frontiersman, operates in cycles of movement, not "ever-onward," but ever-moving between the city and the forest. The logger, too, enters into dangerous and alien territory to prepare it for habitation, and must be self-reliant in his skill. Peter L. Bayers in *Imperial Ascent*:

Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire describes Dr. Frederick A. Cook's expedition to climb the mountain of Denail (Mount McKinley) as one where

following the frontier hero ethos, Cook defines his expedition in masculine discourse. He is a frontier hero forging his identity against the nearly 'insurmountable' Alaskan wilderness and his 'alpine rival.' As a threatening 'rival,' the wilderness implicitly requires a powerful hero to subdue this threat...
(24)

Similarly, the lumberjack views the wilderness around him as a rival, a threat to be heroically conquered and pacified.

Consider the following stanzas of Trower's poem "Collision Course":

He is the sort of fastidious faller
who mixes his gas with a measuring cup
his boots are carefully greased
they crunch through the remnant snow
he carries the powersaw casually like a suitcase.

The tree shudders
as the chain rips through its growth rings
the man guides his tool impassively
thinking about his wife and kids
chips spray like shrapnel
the engine growls like a wounded cougar
fibres part before blurring teeth
the tree quakes begins to inch
unwilling from the vertical.

The man withdraws the saw snaps it silent
leans against a stump gropes for a smoke
on a tearing hinge of wood
the tree tips hisses down (*Haunted* 70)

In this poem Trower presents the image of the masculine ideal: the composed autonomous warrior. The alliteration of "fastidious" with "faller" in the first line of the poem immediately draws attention to the importance of the logger's precise and exacting attitude. The first stanza positions the logger as a self-reliant, emotionally contained man

who exudes the qualities of skill, precision, professionalism, dependability and readiness. There is no mention of his emotional state of mind, but rather a list of external attributes and actions through which his masculinity is constructed. In a state of utmost alacrity, the logger is an embodiment of potential energy, ready to explode into violence; the powersaw is still; it is a casual extension of the man's body despite its inherently violent nature.

Juxtaposed against the image of the self-contained logger is the kinetic energy of the second stanza. The violence "explodes" as the powersaw "rips through" the growth rings of the tree; the logger has begun to conquer the rival and threat of the woods. Yet the third line of the second stanza suggests that in spite of the explosive violence of the powersaw ripping into the tree, the violence is ultimately controlled by the logger as he "guides his tool impassively"; he is in complete control. Amidst this violence the logger does think about "his wife and kids," but again, emotion is absent, and Trower instead presents his reader with the spraying "shrapnel" of wood chips, and the violent bending of the powersaw to the will of the logger, the saw becoming a "wounded cougar," indicative of the pervasive warrior-attitude of domination, pacification and conquest. The "wife and kids," then, become nothing more than indicators of the man's status as the head of the family and "breadwinner" on whom others are dependant and who are thus subjugated by his masculinity. The focus of the stanza is entirely on the masculine ideal of violent conquest, the taming and pacification of the woods as represented by the tree.

Even in the third stanza where the tree has been "vanquished," the threat conquered, the masculine ideal of violence prevails. Here Trower describes the quick, practiced actions of the logger as he "withdraws the saw" and "snaps it silent." The

briskness and surety of the actions do not, however, dispel or diminish the sense of violence in the poem, but rather enhance it. Inherently, the saw is a tool of violence, its purpose *is* destruction.⁴³ The brisk and confident nature of the man's actions, when coupled with the danger presented by a powersaw, are further indications of his skill and professionalism, and as such contribute to the construction of his normative masculinity as one which is inclusive of the embodiment of force.

Another poem in which the force of men's bodies is used as a destructive tool and as a means of conquest and pacification is "The Finishing." Consider the final stanza:

we have had our way with this mountain,
another woodwar won,
another forest felled and stolen,
another notch on some timber king's desk –
another virgin hill ahead of us (*Haunted* 39)

The woods, as in "Collision Course" and in Cook's expedition above, represent a threat, a rival which needs to be subdued, conquered and vanquished. Yet Trower adds a further dimension to the masculine discourse used by Cook by suggesting a sense of the mythological through words and phrases such as "woodwar," "timber king," and "virgin." When taken in conjunction with one another these terms are evocative of Greek and medieval mythology, of knights, battles, and quests in and through which a man's masculinity was constructed to fit with the hegemonic, patriarchal norm. The mythological dimension of this stanza is used to build up the concept of "the rival" and "the threat" to hyperbolic proportions in order to further enhance the event of conquest

⁴³ Note that these stanzas could also be read as a sexual conquest in which the logger "guides his tool" into the feminized tree, later withdrawing after his conquest has been completed. Ultimately the act of conquest results in the death of both woman as tree and the man who is pinned to the stump by the tree in the bloody climax of the poem.

and pacification, and thereby also enhance the construct of masculinity in the woods to cohere with the established normative ideal. The men in this stanza do not just violently or forcefully log the mountain, they violently use their bodies, their tools, to “have their way,” or rape the mountain forest which is ascribed the female gender. The construction of masculinity as a hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity is aided by positing the quality of “virgin” as belonging to the forest and thereby enhances the sense of “maleness,” of power, force, and conquest that can be attributed to the male conquerors as a result of the supposed increased “value” of the object of conquest by virtue of its “virginal” status. Even without the presence of women the feminine is present; the feminine is transposed onto the object of conquest – the forest –, thus reinscribing patriarchal systems and hegemonic masculinity. Positioning the forest as feminine causes women to become “things” or “objects” to be assigned exchange value, “things” to be destroyed and chauvinistically “notched” onto the proverbial bedpost, nothing more than catalysts for the construction of masculine bonds.

Triangulation, Desire and Homosocial Bonds

The subject of women as objects or catalysts through which the bonding of men is achieved, cemented, and continually negotiated within a systemic patriarchal framework has as one of its fundamental points of origin Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, which, in turn, draws on the work of Gayle Rubin in “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex” and René Girard’s *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel*. Girard begins his book with the following premise: “A basic contention of this essay is that the great writers apprehend intuitively

and concretely, through the medium of their art, if not formally, the system in which they were first imprisoned together with their contemporaries” (3), and further that “literary interpretation must be systematic because it is the continuation of literature. It should formalize implicit or already half-explicit systems” (3). Though Girard’s phrase “the great writers” is problematic at best – evoking a host of concerns regarding canonization, privilege, and hierarchy – his primary concern that literature, and the examination thereof, reveals the systems in which it was produced and which it represents, is essentially valid. One of the systems of concern for Girard is the triangular relationship between two rivals and their object of desire, their beloved. Girard’s basic contention is that the bond between the two rivals is as intense as, or greater than, that which links either to their object of desire. Further, the choice of the object of desire or beloved is often determined by the rivalry itself, which in Girard’s formulation is most often between two males and one female. Sedgwick remarks in *Between Men* that “within the male-centred novelistic tradition of European high culture, the triangles Girard uncovers are most often those in which two males are rivals for a female, it is the bond between males that he most assiduously uncovers” (21). In Sedgwick’s case the concern is a triangular model whereby male homosocial⁴⁴ desire can be examined within the context of male heterosexual desire.

Sedgwick builds upon Girard’s work by examining how women are ultimately damaged in the rivalry between men. In addition to building on the work of Girard, Sedgwick employs an argument by Gayle Rubin from her seminal essay “The Traffic in

⁴⁴ Describing social bonds between persons of the same sex. “It is applied to such activities as ‘male bonding,’ which may, as in our society, be characterized by intense homophobia, fear and hatred of homosexuality” (Sedgwick 1).

Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex.” Sedgwick summarizes Rubin’s argument that “patriarchal heterosexuality can best be discussed in terms of one or another form of the traffic in women: it is the use of women as exchangeable, perhaps symbolic, property for the primary purpose of cementing bonds of men with men” (26-7). In conjunction with Rubin’s position, Sedgwick uses Heidi Hartman’s definition of patriarchy – “relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women” (in Sedgwick 3) – to ultimately argue

that concomitant changes in the structure of the continuum of male ‘homosocial desire’ were tightly, often causally bound up with more visible changes; that the emerging pattern of male friendship, mentorship, entitlement, rivalry, and hetero- and homosexuality was in an intimate and shifting relation to class; and that no element of that pattern can be understood outside of its relation to women and the gender system as a whole (1)

The chapter section “Masculinity in the Woods” examined how, even in the absence of women, the masculinity of the logging industry was often constructed as patriarchal, hegemonic, and systemic, with the result that women were vicariously subjugated, dominated, and in the words of Rubin, assigned an exchange value, even if only symbolic. In other words, Trower’s poetry revealed or “formalised” the system of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity in the logging industry. Returning to Hatty’s work in *Masculinities, Violence, and Culture*, we saw that the lumberjack is indeed, “willing to enter unknown and dangerous territory and prepare it for habitation... [rejecting] the comforts of romantic or sexual relationships” (136). Yet, what remains unexamined is how masculinity is constructed in an urban environment *with* the presence of women.

Here, the poetry of Peter Trower is again instructive. Based on his experiences on the streets of Vancouver and other cities of British Columbia, Trower writes poetry concretely elucidates Sedgwick's position on Girard's erotic triangles; his urban poetry aptly illustrates the construction of masculinity in urban environments and the impact that this has on both sexes.

Consider the poem "Past Imperfect." In this poem Trower describes a scene where three men – "me and Dapper and Bird" (*Hitting* 17), – drink or "knock...back the better part / of a twenty-six of whisky" (17) and head to a town dance in order to "vie for girls" (17). Immediately established in this introductory part of the poem is the rivalry and the psychology of rivalry and competition that is present between the three rivals as indicated by the term "vie," suggesting a struggle for objects of desire, namely women. Simultaneously, women are positioned as objects to be struggled for in terms of value and exchange. Thus, from the outset, the poem formalizes, in Girardian terms, the system of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity as represented by the triangular relationship between the three males and their intended objects of desire. In his examination of the triangular relationship present in Dostoyevsky's *The Eternal Husband*, Girard suggests that "the hero is always trying to convince us that his relationship to the object of desire is independent of the rival," yet as Girard reveals in his analysis, we see that the hero – that all rivals in the triangle in fact – deceives us, the object of his desire clearly contingent on the process of "vying," and thus on his rivals.

As the poem progresses the three rivals reach the dance and the narrator comes into contact with his object of desire:

who's that pensive girl with the pretty face
 asearch? Drift over and make small talk
 in the dim crush Soon love ballads lick around us

 I clutch her for a dumb dream's worth
 in the moil and pulse and push sitting
 out the bast ones with cokes or coffees swimming
 back into the warm rhythmic sea
 on the slower numbers Can it possibly be
 We slide rapturously toward some vague
 idyllic future with motions of new knowing (17-18)

The narrator of the poem has ceased to represent the presence of his rivals from the instance of his contact with the woman. For him they have ceased to exist; he has won the contest; he now possesses the object of desire and proceeds to flaunt his possession by spending every subsequent moment with her to the exclusion of his rivals. Similar to Girard's revelation regarding *The Eternal Husband* that "Pavel Pavlovitch can desire only through the mediation of Veltchaninov, *in* Veltchaninov...[and] drags Veltchaninov along to the house of the lady he has chosen, so that he might desire her and thus guarantee her erotic value" (47), it is clear that the presentation and public display of the object of desire in "Past Imperfect" – as indicated by the narrator's constant presence with the woman and the rapturous sliding in the moil and pulse – is the narrator's attempt to guarantee her erotic value in the eyes of his rivals. Like Pavlovitch, the narrator can only truly desire through the mediation of his rivals. Also similar to the actions of Pavlovitch, the narrator "drags" his rivals to a location where he can further guarantee the erotic value of his beloved:

...Somehow I'm in the can
 with Dapper and Bird taking a slug "hey, man"
 says Bird "you know that girl you're with's
 got a club foot?" "You're kidding!" I say. In all
 that mob I never noticed Later
 I look He's right (18)

Rather than an encounter with his rivals in which the erotic value of the beloved, the object of desire, is guaranteed, the narrator is faced with an encounter in which the erotic value of his object of desire is not guaranteed, but repudiated.

It is at this point that Sedgwick's analysis of William Wycherley's *The Country Wife* is particularly fruitful:

To misunderstand the kind of property women are or the kind of transaction in which alone their value is realizable means, for a man, to endanger his own position as subject in the relationship of exchange: to be permanently feminized or objectified in relation to other men. On the other hand, success in making this transaction requires a willingness and ability to temporarily risk, or assume, a feminized status. Only the man who can proceed through that stage, *while* remaining in cognitive control of the symbolic system that presides over sexual encounters, will be successful in achieving a relation of mastery to other men. (50-1)

The narrator of "Past Imperfect" does indeed assume a feminized status within the framework of a patriarchal or hegemonic masculinity as he becomes involved in the dance and in his reverie of love, rapture, and a "vague / idyllic future." Yet the contention of the rivals, proven true, changes the circumstances of the transaction, by refuting the exchange value of the eroticism and desirability of the object of desire. The narrator, demonstrating an understanding of the symbolic system that "presides" over the encounter and the kind of property that women are within this system, realizes that he can not proceed with his "transaction" concurrent to "achieving a relation of mastery to other men." Further, he understands that to continue with the transaction would mean the disintegration of the triangular system, and thus the dissolution of the bonds of rivalry and homosocial desire; he would be "feminized or objectified in relation to other men."

Thus, the scene must, within a patriarchal framework, conclude as follows:

It shouldn't even matter
but it does Love goes down like a lead balloon
I ditch her and end in the same foolish way
with Dapper and Bird at the Black Cat Café
talking of perfect women we'll never win (18)

The narrator proves both Girard's position that the rivalry is of paramount importance, as well as Sedgwick's position that homosocial bonds and desire are more important than heterosexual desire. Faced with a situation in which the object of desire was deemed unworthy and of no erotic value, and in spite of the self-reflexive moment of recognition that the system is fundamentally flawed, inappropriate, and sexist ("it shouldn't even matter"), the narrator chooses to cement his homosocial bonds; he remains in the patriarchal system of hegemonic masculinity, discussing and debating future transactions and valuations of women.

Sedgwick suggests, "to women, in addition, the heterosexual detour of male homosocial desire is potentially damaging almost regardless of whether it succeeds, although perhaps damaging in various ways depending on its 'success'" (50). Thus, in "Past Imperfect" where masculinity is portrayed as being constructed along the lines of patriarchy and homosocial bonds, it is the woman (named Maxine in the poem) who is ultimately damaged in the "transactions" of the males. It is she who is doubly othered, both as a woman, and as an individual who does not fit into the masculine preconceived idea of eroticism and beauty as a result of her birth defect – her "club foot." While the three men are able to return to the comfort and safety of their position within hegemonic masculinity, the object of their desire is cast aside, stigmatized. Yet more than this, the men are content to further perpetuate systemic masculinity of this type through their masculine discourse, "talking of perfect women we'll never win" (18). The public

discourse of the ideal, that of the “perfect women,” operates as a type of speech act whereby it is “doing” the creation of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity; this discourse is perpetuating and creating the construct of an ideal which arguably neither women nor men can ever “win” or achieve because of the very fact of its ideality. Both sexes in this case are inevitably damaged; the positioning of an ideal of this sort creates class stratifications and hierarchies which impact masculinity in the sense of “winning” or attaining the ideal woman as partner, mate, or conquest – masculinity being judged against the degree of success in completing this transaction as illustrated in “Past Imperfect.” Conversely, women too are damaged by the creation and perpetuation of this type of ideal because it results in the continuation of systemic patriarchy whereby femininity is subjugated by masculinity. Simultaneously, femininity would also become stratified being judged against the degree of success in which a woman coheres with the ideal in opposition to other women.

Another poem in which the triangular pattern of male homosocial desire can be discerned is “First Dance.” Contrary to the expectations generated by the title, the poem opens with the description of a Girardian erotic triangle:

*With a twist of the wrist
I went out and got pissed*
sings Slim Bankhead in nineteen forty-two
the world’s burning into bombsmoke
beyond this backwater place
as he courts my friend Bob’s older sister
in the pulpmill town
among the smells witchdark Vera
who stirs more than she knows
in my twelve-year-old loins till I squirm
with unfamiliar jealousy hating cocky Slim
when he kisses her in corners...(62)

Again, it is primarily through the mediator, the rival Slim, that the feelings of the narrator are channelled. Slim Bankhead's courtship of Vera guarantees her erotic value in the eyes of the narrator; this initiatory sexual encounter of the narrator – his “jealousy” and sexual desire – are awakened in the poem only after the relationship between Slim and Vera has been established. The configuration among Slim, Vera and the narrator is triangular, yet not symmetrical; in the words of Sedgwick, there is a blatant asymmetry “of powers and energies” (31). Although this is the remembered story of the narrator, the locus of control does not reside with the narrator, but rather with Vera, and to a slight extent, Slim. It is Slim who “sings” the introductory lines of the poem, and Vera who “stirs” the feelings of the “victimized” narrator who is described as being passively forced to “squirm” and hate, the scene described as if the narrator, in his twelve year old youth, was being acted on. The asymmetry of the scene positions the narrator as the individual who is feminized and subjugated by the masculinity of his rival, even if this only occurs in the mind of the narrator. This asymmetry between male and female continues throughout the poem with the locus of control always with the female. Following the above excerpt the scene abruptly shifts to a New Year's Eve dance where the narrator observes the “emancipated / girls of the wartime mill doing men's jobs / making men's money and hay,” and is witness to “married women flirting / in best dresses with the wrong husbands...” (62). In all of these scenarios envisioned by the young narrator it is the females who are doing the acting and desiring, the men at best passive recipients and embodiments of acceptance.

At the close of the poem Vera appears once again:

Saturday-night beer-parlour windows suddenly
 crimson-lipped Vera homing in
 like a vision through the clutching crowd bussing Bob and me
 both soundly on the lips Oh God! I can smell

her perfume feel, weak with dim joy, her black
hair brushing my face now I know for certain I'm
going to marry her when I grow up no matter what
the hell with Slim Bankhead headily
I can taste her lovely lipsticked mouth
for weeks (63)

The narrator remains passive at first, Vera still the aggressor, “homing in” to kiss the two boys. At the end of the poem, however, the locus of control shifts to the narrator who asserts with startling finality that he will marry Vera and thus asserts his masculinity.

A related asymmetry of semantic content is also present in the poem. The predominant constituent of the triangle, Vera, is described as “witchdark,” “stirring,” “crimson-lipped,” and as “homing in,” whereas the narrator himself is not described, and Slim is only described as “cocky.” The configuration, then, is one where the female has a negative valuation stemming from associations of evil arising out of the adjectives used to describe her. Further, she has a monopoly on power, initiative and desire while one male, Slim, has but a single trait, and the other is revealed to be filled with lust, jealousy, and hate, though unable to act on these emotions. The central concern here is that in contrast to “Past Imperfect” where the rivalry for the object of desire occurs between peers and intimates, the continuum or range of this type of triangular formulation, of male bonds, stretches to include scenarios such as the pseudo-oedipal one portrayed in “First Dance” where the rivalry is still on par with, if not more important than the acquisition of the object of desire. It is hate and jealousy that pervade the last lines of the poem as the narrator states “to hell with Slim Bankhead.” Structurally, it is Slim’s banishment or conveyance to hell in the mind of the narrator that occurs prior to and facilitates his daydream of Vera’s “lipsticked mouth.”

Though on one hand there is indeed an atypical configuration of the power structure in “First Dance,” the poem is told as a remembered event from the point of view of the narrator. Thus, the positioning of the locus of control and the assignation of character qualities by means of adjectival descriptors resides solely with the narrator. With the assumedly adult narrator imposing his accrued experience onto the narrative, it becomes clear that the negative moral valuation of the character Vera, and of the inappropriately flirtatious “married women,” in conjunction with the change of locus of control to the narrator of the poem, reveals a situation in which masculinity is once again constructed as patriarchal and hegemonic. The masculine narrator has global control over how this story is told, and thus his memory becomes a vehicle through which the feminine is objectified and subjugated. She is the object of the transaction whereby he reasserts control, reasserts his masculinity, and reinscribes patriarchal control over a situation – that of the memory – in which his masculinity was subjugated. Having constructed a scenario where his masculinity was damaged, not by the rival Slim, but by Vera – who in the construct had the monopoly on initiative and power – it is only through the telling of the story itself – as a speech act – that the narrator can publicly reassert his masculine power and authority. Hence, again, in the configuration of male homosocial desire it is the female that is ultimately damaged.

Multiple Masculinities and the Self-Made Man

Common to both the hegemonic masculinity constructed in the logging industry, and that constructed through triangular relationships with rivals for particular women or “objects of desire,” is the centrality of the public nature of such constructions. In “Invisible

Masculinity,” the introduction to his book *The History of Men: Essays on the History of American and British Masculinities*, Michael Kimmel ties the public component of the construction of masculinity to nation:

If we are a nation, as Henry Clay coined the term in 1832, of “self-made men,” then the process of self-making, of identity formation, is a public enactment, performed before the valuative eyes of other men. Nineteenth-century masculinity was a masculinity defined, tried, and tested in the marketplace. This was potentially terrifying, since the market is unstable, and it is potentially a “site of humiliation” as Henry David Thoreau called it before he tried to escape to Walden Pond (8)

Kimmel is likely drawing on an earlier essay “The Birth of the Self Made Man” where he states that

the central characteristic of being self-made was that the proving ground was the public sphere, specifically the workplace. And the workplace was a man’s world...If manhood could be proved, it had to be proved in the eyes of other men. From the early nineteenth-century until the present day, most of men’s relentless efforts to prove their manhood contain this core element of homosociality. From fathers and boyhood friends to our teachers, co-workers, and bosses, it is the evaluative eyes of other men that are always upon us, watching, judging (141)

While Kimmel seems to suggest that the concept of the “self-made” man is firmly linked to concepts and ideas of nation, the United States of America in particular, I suggest that the idea of the self-made man is one which is wedded to the type of masculinity found in the preceding studies of masculinity in the logging industry, and that which is found in triangular configurations. I further posit that a core element of hegemonic, patriarchal masculinity is the idea of the self-made man. In the hegemonic masculinity constructed in the woods the constituent components of skill, hierarchical structure, violence, speech acts, and mythmaking all implicitly contain the idea of the self-made man, the man who, through his own body, skill, and intellect, rises above and subjugates others. These constructions of masculinity in the woods are always public constructions. Thus, as a

result, multiple masculinities are, at least to a certain extent, forced to conform to the hegemonic ideal which is a response to the terrifying forces of the market atmosphere in the larger world. Masculinity in the woods is negotiated, attained, cemented, assigned value, exchanged, and renegotiated, forming a “marketplace of masculinity” pervaded by insecurity and fear resultant from the fact that a failure to cohere with the ideal results in ostracization, humiliation, and subjugation. Similarly, even with the presence of females, perhaps especially resultant from the presence of females, this marketplace mentality prevails. As is the case in “Past Imperfect,” the narrator is constantly in the presence of his rivals, his masculinity watched, judged, and evaluated. Yet because of the association of stereotypical “male” qualities with desirability, the judgement is double, perceived as occurring both from the direction of evaluative male eyes as well as evaluative female eyes. The instability of the corporate marketplace parallels the instability of the marketplace of masculinity – a site that is potentially terrifying and which carries the potential for humiliation, thus creating a pressure to conform.

Rather than a circular argument attempting to locate males in positions of victimization, this analysis seeks on one hand to offer a potential account for the continued perpetuation of hegemonic patriarchal masculinity, and on the other hand to offer an account as to the seeming homogenous nature of masculinity in the woods and in an urban environment as a hegemonic patriarchal masculinity. Clearly, reading Trower’s poetry as revealing, representing, or formalizing the system of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity as it occurred in the logging industry and in urban environments is viable, and crucial in understanding how this masculinity is constructed. Yet, simultaneously Trower’s poetry formalizes the concept of multiple masculinities that was developed by

later gender theorists. In her introduction to *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory, New Directions*, Judith Kegan Gardiner reports that

Although dominant or hegemonic forms of masculinity work constantly to maintain an appearance of permanence, stability, and naturalness, the numerous masculinities in every society are contingent, fluid, socially and historically constructed, changeable and constantly changing, variously institutionalized and recreated through media representations and individual and collective performances (11)

Carrigan et al. in “Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity” occupy a similar position when they qualify their definition of hegemonic masculinity – “how particular groups of men inhabit positions of power and wealth, and how they legitimate and reproduce the social relationships that generate their dominance” (112) – by suggesting that

an immediate consequence of this is that the culturally exalted form of masculinity, the hegemonic model so to speak, may only correspond to the actual characters of a small number of men... There is a distance, and a tension, between collective ideal and actual lives. Most men do not really act like the screen image of John Wayne or Humphrey Bogart; and when they try to, it is likely to be thought comic... (112)⁴⁵

Insofar as the poetry of Trower is concerned, it complicates the standard normative view of masculinity by subtly undermining stereotypical masculine qualities and instead aligning men with atypical masculine qualities which would otherwise effeminize them and result in their subjugation to hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, the juxtaposition of poetry and logging is itself a comment on the construction of masculinity; the harsh jargon of the logging world is paired side by side with harmonious poetic diction.

One of Trower’s key concerns in his poetry is the locus of control and power.

Typically, in connection with hegemonic masculinity the locus of control resides with

⁴⁵ Carrigan et al. do go on to state that “very large numbers of men are complicit in sustaining the hegemonic model” (112-3) for a multitude of reasons.

men and the object of their control is thus effectively feminized, othered, and subjugated as was evident in the preceding section on “Masculinity in the Woods.” Conversely, Trower’s poetry often positions the locus of control in opposition to men and thereby formalizes the system of tension between collective ideal and actual life posited by Carrigan et al. For instance, in the poems “The Finishing” and “Goliath Country” there is a pervasive sense of sadness and desolation that is incongruent if not diametrically opposed to the stereotypically exultant masculine embodiment of power for the purposes of conquest. In “The Finishing,” the narrator reports “Last day last hour last log / a sense of relief a sense of sadness” (39). The relief and sadness of the narrator, coupled with the tediousness and unwelcome nature of the task as indicated by the caesural pause, indicates that the conquest of the forest is not necessarily a triumphant act representative of the masculine embodiment of force, but rather a burden, the relief of which leaves a feeling of empty desolation. Similarly, the narrator of “Goliath Country” describes how

Some David has run amok
with a relentless sling
leaving a broken green chaos
an apocalypse of wood
and a new void in the universe
where Goliaths once stood (19)

Here the negative character of the task of logging is more fully exposed. Trower goes beyond the sadness in “The Finishing” and suggests environmental catastrophe resulting in negative space, a void “in the universe” and thus in the men who created it. These ideas are incommensurate with hegemonic masculinity, and though literally it is the men who have participated in the act of destruction and in this way remain the locus of control, it is the men who are being acted on in the sense that they are left with sadness and emptiness beyond their control. It is by conjoining these two oppositional facets of

logging that Trower shifts gears to trouble the homogenous and static view of hegemonic masculinity.

The men in his poems are, as often as not, transgressors. In “The Animals” Trower explicitly describes the men in the woods as “makinawed transgressors” (42); the implication in this poem, where the narrator states that “the season takes aim on us / and the animals know” (42), is that the loggers are not in control, but are being watched, judged, and condemned for their transgression. Self-realization and awareness of the negative consequences of destruction of the woods and in turn its female assignation is common in Trower’s poetry. Even in the city the men are described as aware of the problematic construct of masculinity as is evident from the narrator’s declaration “it shouldn’t even matter /but it does” in “Past Imperfect.” Indeed, the locus of control is sometimes positioned entirely in opposition to the men. In a mishap described in “Collision Course” “the butt connects like a wooden hoof / pins the man to the stump” (71), and in “Booby Trap” the narrator describes how “that mule-kicking alder barberchairs back, catches me clean in the crotch” (67). The inference that can be made is that the locus of control does not always automatically reside with the men, but rather with the environment; Trower shifts the locus of control from the human to the non-human; he makes man the infidel and the transgressor, frail and susceptible to injury. By extension the woods, assigned a female designation in Trower’s poetry, is thus put, at least to some extent, in a position of power. Further, the men, Bill the sky-hanger for instance, who are celebrated for their skill, their “subliminal savvy,” are often ultimately damaged by their cohesion with this collective ideal:

Once in a back room at a weekend party
you showed me your private arsenal –

twenty-five loaded guns in a secret trunk,
even a Smith and Wesson.

“No one fucks with me, kid!”
you declared unsurely,
sweating terror
like an enemy in your eyes,
knowing the brain’s blackest hounds
need only one careful bullet (59)

Hence, there is a lack of force, a lack of hegemonic masculine characteristics, often present in Trower’s poetry. Rather, there manifests an attitude of self-awareness, environmental concern, and emotion. Further, Trower formalizes the idea that the locus of control does not necessarily reside with men in the woods, and thereby undermines the homogeneity of the category of hegemonic masculinity. The men such as Bill the sky-hanger that are celebrated as icons of masculinity are often irrevocably damaged. There is an undercurrent of uncertainty about the viability and “rightness” of the actions of conquest and pacification that runs through Trower’s poetry. When these atypically masculine concepts and qualities are paired with the construction of hegemonic masculinity, they inevitably become a part of the collective ideal, and in turn undermine the category. Trower’s poetry reveals or formalizes the process whereby the monolithic construct or collective ideal of hegemonic masculinity becomes deconstructed through its contact and confrontation with actual lives and multiple masculinities.

In *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer states that “the only condition to which literature is subject to is being handed down in language and taken up in reading” (153). It is this idea, that of the utmost centrality of language to literature, which underpins this thesis. Indeed, it is the centrality of language to literature, and thus language to culture, which makes this thesis both possible and important. First and foremost, language is always and already about language. The recursive and polysemic nature of language is what allows literature to become a site of interpretation, opening, and understanding. Concurrently, language is how we come to self awareness as individuals and as human beings in a collective. Ulrich Arnswald suggests in “On the Certainty of Uncertainty: Language Games and Forms of Life in Gadamer and Wittgenstein” that “since language is the primary vehicle of expression, linguistic meaning becomes a crucial component of social life” (29). Arnswald further states that “as members of a community we come to realize that the tradition and presuppositions of that community already shaped and moulded our language and action from the very first day we entered into it...” (29). In this examination of the commonalities between Wittgenstein and Gadamer, Arnswald comes to the conclusion that

Both Gadamer and Wittgenstein agree that we inherit particular *parameters of interpretation*, or a particular background, through the history of the society and culture we belong to. The Gadamerian hermeneutical approach, however, requires not only that we understand the history or knowledge of the past but that we face the encounter with the other. The aim of this process is not to control the other, but rather reach a common ground for further redefining one’s own objectives and to reach further understanding and knowledge (35)

Here, Gadamer’s reliance on Heidegger’s contention that “we come to understand ourselves through our projects and possibilities” as well as his “insistence that the world discloses itself through interpretive discourse” (Dooley and Kearney 6670) is evident.

Perhaps the best synthesis of the point I am trying to make is to again use a quotation from Dooley and Kearney:

It is through the process of responding to the claims which my tradition makes upon me that I come to understand the self that I am. Self-understanding, for Gadamer, involves dialoguing with all those whose voices speak through me. I come to an understanding of *who* I am by reading and responding to those into whose heritage and legacy I have been situated. Hence, I am always already engaged in conversation with others who have gone before. The self is, in other words, dialogical through and through (6670)

All of this, of course, leads back to language – and the recursive nature thereof – as one of the ways in which tradition and culture are transmitted, and through which we understand ourselves. The Gadamerian hermeneutical position is key in understanding how Said’s ideas of culture and contrapuntal criticism operate in highlighting the importance Trower’s work has, both to understanding the tradition of the resource economy of British Columbia, and our contemporary relationship to it. Further, this hermeneutical position foregrounds both Starnino’s contention, as well as my own contention, that Trower’s poetry carries with it the burden and the possibilities of poetic tradition going back to early twentieth century England. Trower’s poetry opens up a dialogue with these traditions and with the self, whereby the goal of further knowledge and understanding is at least partially realized. As Gadamer suggests, “literature is a function of being intellectually preserved and handed down, and therefore brings its hidden history into every age” (154). Of equal importance in the hermeneutical position is the Gadamerian idea that

for hermeneutic understanding it follows that we are not limited to the premises of our tradition but rather continually revise them in the encounters with and discussion we have about them. In confronting other cultures, other prejudices, and, indeed, the implications that others draw from our own traditions, we learn to

reflect on both our assumptions and our ideas of reason and to amend them in the direction of a better account (Warnke in Arnswald 37)

Here the importance of a gender studies approach to Trower's poetry becomes crucial. In the dialogue between contemporary critical theory and Trower's poetry, and thus the world in which it is situated, we do indeed confront another culture and other prejudices. Yet this is not all. In confronting these "other cultures" and "other prejudices" we simultaneously initiate a dialogical position with ourselves and confront our own culture and prejudices insofar as those traditions we are encountering are also present in our contemporary understanding itself, situated as it is within a particular heritage, legacy, and culture. In the case of gender studies, and of the masculine culture implicit in Trower's poetry, it is my hope that this study does indeed initiate a dialogue of sorts whereby we can reflect on assumptions and ideas in order to both amend them "in the direction of a better account" and to further our knowledge and understanding.

The direction of future research I am building toward is twofold. Fundamentally, I am alluding to the meaning of literature itself as one which in spite of contemporary criticism remains somewhat narrow; the direct result being the neglect of such authors as Peter Trower and all of which follows from this neglect. In addressing this particular concern Gadamer is again instructive:

All written works have a profound community in that language is what makes the contents meaningful. In this light, when texts are understood by, say, a historian, that is not so very different from their being experienced as art. And it is not mere chance that the concept of literature embraces not only works of literary art but everything passed down in writing (156)

More specifically I am alluding to the neglect of a poet such as Peter Trower itself. That is, the fact of this neglect is symptomatic of a basic lack of analysis and synthesis of

British Columbia literature. While a categorization of British Columbian literature is in some sense reductive considering the deconstruction or refraction of such limitation and categorization present in chapters three and four of this study, the absence of any sort of systematic and comprehensive analysis remains problematic. Thus a direction for future research might be a study which addresses this absence from a hermeneutic perspective. Perhaps a narrowing down or categorization of British Columbia Literature through which such a category can be simultaneously deconstructed and dissolved is in order; one which “through an exchange of different views and perspectives, different forms of life, and different world-pictures, we can enrich our own understanding and knowledge” (Arnswald 34).

APPENDICES

Appendix A: “Remembering Al, A Tribute to Al Purdy”

Remembering Al, A Tribute to Al Purdy

Hey, Al
I remember an afternoon in the late Sixties
before we became friends
you and Milt Acorn, poets in full flight
storming into the Cecil Pub following your cigars
like a couple of Groucho Marxes
to set up shop at a corner table
ordering beer continuing some arcane argument
while another nonentity and myself sat looking on
mightily impressed

And that prophetic meeting in 1972
you were so fond of recounting
when, along with Howie White and Curt Lang,
consuming humungous quantities of beer
then descending on a startled Esther Birney –
Earle being out of town –
regaling her with steaks, more beer and poetry
till the poor lady’s head must have been spinning
like the possessed girl’s in *The Exorcist*

Four years later in Toronto
at the launch of *Storm Warning 2*
where you’d managed to bypass the under-30 age-limit
by including my stuff in the intro –
you were in fine fettle that night
playing King of the Poets with obvious gusto
while lonely Milton scribbled obliviously in a back room –
turning to me, you said, one arm around the McStew p.r. lady,
“all this could be yours someday, Pete
if you just keep on writing” –
I wish you’d been right but, come to think of it,
that p.r. lady was way too tall for me anyhow

And the first time we read together
at the Literary Storefront in Gastown
you and Eurithe just back from Mexico
with suntans and new poems –
me only three days away from my mother's impending death
trying not to dwell on it –
you and Eurithe suitably sympathetic
you and I doing our respective things –
late to the Cecil with George Bowering,
Andy Suknaski and a slew of others
for a bout of drunken poetic blather

Sechelt Writer's Festival, several years after this –
Yvonne and I, finally together, picking you up at the seaplane dock
you sporting a new moustache very impressed with Yvonne –
down to my late mother's house for beer and talk –
me showing you my first mimeographed collection of jingly doggerel –
you remarking charitably that it wasn't as bad as *The Enchanted Echo* –
you asking how the writing was going –
me, just rejected by McStew, saying "Not too great" –
you offering to edit and agent the manuscript for me –
taking it east with you placing it with Oberon –
God knows, Al, that was a decent thing for you to do –
you gave me my confidence back

And the years and the years and the years

Sidney in the nineties and our only serious quarrel –
triggered by your Roderick Haig Brown book *Couger Hunter* –
you figuring I had somehow doublecrossed you –
writing me a peevish, accusatory letter to that effect –
me firing one right back to set things straight –
the matter, thankfully, ending right there –
God knows, Al, I owed you too much to ever sell you out

And then the treacherous cancer the inexorable decline –
you phoning me from Ameliasburgh to tell me that Peggy Atwood
was revising her Oxford anthology and to send my best poems
still being my dutch uncle even in your exigency –
me asking nervously about your condition –
you saying you'd finished the radiation but hadn't got the results –
me saying wishfully: "Hell, Al, you're tough. You can beat this" –
you saying wistfully, realistically: "Afraid I'm not that tough" –
and sadly, of course, you weren't

Our last meeting – Yvonne and I dropping in
to give you a copy of *Chainsaws in the Cathedral*
the book you had always been after me to put together –
for which you had both coined the title
and written the great introduction –
you thin and frail but still in good spirits, looking pleased
urging me, as always to keep on writing –
me thinking I was glad to be able to give it to you
while you were still around –
it was as though we had completed a project
embarked upon long ago

Hey, Al
I guess you're maybe sitting in a rented room
on one of the outer planets by now
writing new poems we'll never get to read
or perhaps you're strolling the hills and valleys
of legendary Gondwanaland, a billion years ago –
be well, old friend, wherever you are in unfathomable eternity –
unlike the title of your final book you will never be
Beyond Remembering

– Peter Trower, *There are Many Ways*

Appendix B: “The Ballad of Peter Trower”

The Ballad of Peter Trower

Here’s a young, old wage-slave expended
To the edge of ruin in wars
With the green giants of the rain forest;
Drinking bad wine like a boss drinking blood.
“What right has he to rhyme and be a poet?”
False twits of the Bad Mountain scream;
Within whose eruptive range he nests
Damming the lava-flows of their ordure
With words about that awful process - Work!
By which they live... Though it’s not done by them.

Pete... Do you keep a crop of neckties?
A score or more, to hang the whole lot,
I badly need – lusting to see them rise.
“He rhymes! He rhymes!” Those batted fowls shout
“And we don’t rhyme – which proves we’re better!”
Not one lonely claim, other than that
Qualifies their right to live by letters:
Though only each other – plus a few masochists
Scrounge through the ungodly sparse word-lists –
Guide-posts to that portentous nothing
They say’s the only bell we poets should ring.
The greatest crime might be, if there weren’t worse,
To push student noses into Bad Mountain mumbling
Until they grumble and their pens fumble
Able to rhyme ‘verse’ only with ‘curse.’

Those Bad Mountain micro-organisms
Roar exorcisms to the Canada Council
“Don’t give this blackguard one cent back
Of all the monies extracted from him.
He’s gone and done unprecedented sin –
Writing a poem about a mountain that’s not
A failure to write a poem about a mountain..
Even Acorn never bent to that...

SONNET AS L'ENVOI

Who else would know and speak so well about
A mountain, as one who's crawled up and all
Round each rock-slide and ferocious redoubt?
Falling to rise again? Rising to fall?
Wrenching ancient conifers from its flanks –
Some excelling thirteen feet through the butt –
By a craft endowed with all except thanks
Eased each down with more than one putt?

Finished that godlike labour should he not
Bow humiliation? Straightaway fly
Out of sight and mind as if he was shot
To that mighty garbagecan in the sky?
“No” he says, not granting even a snort;
Intent on wonders of another sort.

– Milton Acorn
13/3/1977

Appendix C: Works of Peter Trower

Published Books

- *Poems for a Dark Sunday* – self published (1965)
- *Moving Through the Mystery* – Talonbooks (1969)
- *Between the Sky and the Splinters* – Harbour (1974)
- *The Alders and Others* – Harbour (1976)
- *Ragged Horizons* – McClelland & Stewart (1978)
- *Bush Poems* – Harbour (1978)
- *Goosequill Snags* – Harbour (1982)
- *The Slidingback Hills* – Oberon (1986)
- *Unmarked Doorways* – Harbour (1989)
- *Where Roads Lead* – Reference West (1994)
- *Hitting the Bricks* – Ekstasis (1997)
- *Chainsaws in the Cathedral* – Ekstasis (1999)
- *A Ship Called Destiny* – Ekstasis (2000)
- *There are Many Ways* – Ekstasis (2002)
- *Haunted Hills and Hanging Valleys* – Harbour (2004)

Prose

- *Rough and Ready Times* – Glassford (1993)
- *Grogan's Cafè* – Harbour (1993)
- *Dead Man's Ticket* – Harbour (1996)
- *The Judas Hills* – Harbour (2000)

CDs

- *Sidewalks & Sidehills* (2003)
- *Kisses in the Whisky* (2004)

Editor

- *Raincoast Chronicles*
- *Witches and Idiots*

Anthologies

- *A Government Job at Last*
- *Assault on the Worker*
- *Because You Loved Being a stranger*
- *Best Poems – 1967*
- *British Columbia/A Celebration*
- *Earle Birney – A Tribute*
- *For Openers*
- *Going for Coffee*
- *Kites and Cartwheels*
- *Listen*
- *Oberon Poetry*
- *Paperwork*
- *Poems for a Snow-eyed Country*
- *Raincoast Chronicles Eleven Up*
- *Raincoast Chronicles First Five*
- *Raincoast Chronicles Six/Ten*
- *Skookum Wa Wa*
- *Songs from the Wild*
- *Soul of a City*
- *Storm Warning 2*
- *Strong Voices*
- *Vancouver*
- *Vancouver and its Writers*
- *Vancouver Poetry*
- *West Coast Seen*
- *Western Windows*
- *Who Owns the Earth*
- *Witness to Wilderness*

Periodicals

- *B. C. Studies*
- *Business Logger*
- *Canadian Poetry Magazine*
- *Equity*
- *Georgia Straight*
- *Poetry (Chicago)*
- *Poetry Australia*
- *Prism International*
- *Raincoast Chronicles*
- *Sunshine Coast News*
- *This Magazine*
- *Vancouver Magazine*
- *West Coast Review*
- *West World*
- *Western Living*

Movies

- *Between the Sky and the Splinters*. CBC. (1975)
- *Peter Trower: The Men There Were Then*. A Documentary by Alan Twigg and Tom Shandel. 1985
- Trower as himself in *The Diary of Evelyn Lau*. [Adaptation of *Runaway: Diary of a Street Kid*]. Dir. Sturla Gunnarsson. Perf. Sandra Oh. CBC, 1993.

WORKS CITED

- “lacrimae rerum.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr. 2000.
<<http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/cgi/entry/00181778>>.
- “Lacrymal.” *The Oxford English Dictionary*. 2nd ed. 1989. OED Online. Oxford University Press. 4 Apr. 2000.
<<http://dictionary.oed.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/cgi/entry/00181778>>.
- Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th ed. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1999.
- Acorn, Milton. “The Ballad of Peter Trower.” Letter to Peter Trower. 13 March 1977. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Acorn, Milton. Letter to Peter Trower. 13 March 1977. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Acorn, Milton. Letter to Peter Trower. 20 May 1973. Copied to the Canada Council. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Adams, Rachel and David Savran, eds. *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2002.
- Arnsward, Ulrich. “On the Certainty of Uncertainty: Language Games and Forms of Life in Gadamer and Wittgenstein.” *Gadamer’s Century: Essays in Honor of Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Eds Jeff Malpas, Ulrich Arnsward, Jens Kertscher. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002. 25-44.
- Barman, Jean. *The West Beyond the West: A History of British Columbia*. Revised. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
- Bayers, Peter L. *Imperial Ascent, Mountaineering, Masculinity, and Empire*. Colorado: Colorado UP, 2003.
- Birney, Earle. *Selected Poems, 1940-1966*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1966.
- Brod, Harry. “Studying Masculinities as Superordinate Studies.” *Gardiner* 161-175.

- Carrigan, Tim, Bob Connell and John Lee. "Toward a New Sociology of Masculinity." Adams and Savran 99-118.
- Dooley, M, and R. Kearney. "Hermeneutics, including Critical Theory." *International Encyclopaedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences Online*. 2004. 12 October 2006. <<http://www.sciencedirect.com.proxy.lib.sfu.ca/science/referenceworks/0080430767>>
- Eke, James. "Poet of the People: You Probably Don't Know the Name of Former Lumberjack and Poet Peter Trower. And that, Says a Group of B.C. Poets, is the Problem." *Globe & Mail* 29 August 2000: R03.
- Francis, Daniel, and Howard White. *The Encyclopaedia of British Columbia*. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Publishing, 2000.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall. London: Continuum, 2004.
- Gardiner, Judith Kegan, ed. *Masculinity Studies and Feminist Theory, New Directions*. New York: Columbia UP, 2002.
- Gardiner---. "Introduction." Gardiner 1-30.
- Girard, René. *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel, Self and Other in Literary Structure*. Trans Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1965.
- Grainger, Martin Allerdale. *Woodsmen of the West*. Ed. Steven T. Murray. Seattle: Fjord Press, 1988.
- Hatty, Suzanne E. *Masculinities, Violence, and Culture*. California: Sage, 2000.
- Horowitz, Roger, ed. *Boys and Their Toys? Masculinity, Technology, and Class in America*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Hughes, Glenn. *Imagism & the Imagists: A Study in Modern Poetry*. New York: Humanities Press, 1960.
- Hunter, Tim, and Irene Niechoda. "A Tishstory." *Beyond Tish*. Ed. Douglas Barbour. Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1991. 83-98.
- Johnston, Hugh J. M. *The Pacific Province*. Vancouver BC: Douglas & McIntyre, 1996.
- Kimmel, Michael. "The Birth of the Self-made Man." Adams and Savran 135-152.
- . *The History of Men, Essays in the History of American and British Masculinities*. New York: State University of New York, 2005.

- Klan, Yvonne Mearns. *The Old Red Shirt: Pioneer Poets of British Columbia*. Vol. 12. Vancouver: New Star Books, 2004.
- Labbe, John T. and Lynwood Carranco. *Logger's Glossary* from Ralph C. Bryant's 1923 book titled: *Logging: The Principles and General Methods of Operation in the United States*. 17 September 2005.
<<http://home.att.net/~lassen.logger/terms.htm>> Site closed 10 February 2006.
- Lane, Patrick. "To the Outlaw." *Western Windows : A Comparative Anthology of Poetry in British Columbia*. Vancouver: CommCept Pub., 1977. 294.
- Lane, Patrick. Letter to Peter Trower. 3 April 1973. Copied to the Canada Council. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Livesay, Dorothy. Letter to Peter Trower. 27 August 1974. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Mackie, John. "Letters from the Underbelly:" *Vancouver Sun*. 23 April 2005: B.2.
- MacSkimming, Roy. *The Perilous Trade: Publishing Canada's Writers*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2003.
- Marsh, Edward Howard. *Georgian Poetry, 1911-1912*. 10th ed. London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1914.
- McLeod, Les. "Irony and Affirmation in the Poetry of Earle Birney." *Canadian Perspectives. Perspectives on Earle Birney*. Downsview, ON: ECW Press, 1981. 130-158.
- Meyer, Stephen. "Work, Play, and Power, Masculine Culture on the Automotive Shop Floor, 1930-1960." Horowitz 13-32.
- Modleski, Tania. *Feminism Without Women, Culture and Criticism in a 'Postfeminist' Age*. New York: Routledge, 1991.
- Moore, L. Hugh, Jr. "Siegfried Sassoon and Georgian Realism." *Twentieth Century Literature: A Scholarly and Critical Journal* 14.4 (1969): 199.
- Muir, Edwin. *Collected Poems*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1965.
- Newlove, John. Letter to Peter Trower. August 1972. Copied to the Canada Council. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.

- Parkin, Tom. *Wetcoast Words. A Dictionary of British Columbia Words and Phrases*. Victoria, B.C.: Orca Book Publishers, 1951.
- Parry, Malcolm. "People's Writer is B.C.'s Unofficial Poet Laureate: Columnist." *The Vancouver Sun*. 8 January 2005: B.4.
- Perkins, David. *English Romantic Writers*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995.
- Precosky, Donald Alexander. *W.W.E. Ross and His Works*. Toronto: ECW Press, 1987.
- Preminger, Alex, and T. V. F. Brogan. *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*. 3rd ed. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993.
- Purdy, Al. Letter to Peter Trower. 15 October 1972. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Purdy, Al. Letter to Peter Trower. 17 May 1972. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Quam-Wickham, Nancy. "Rereading Man's Conquest of Nature, Skill, Myths, and the Historical Construction of Masculinity in Western Extractive Industries." Horowitz 91-110.
- Reeves, James. *Georgian Poetry, 1920-1922*. London: Penguin Books, 1966.
- Ricou, Laurence. Al Purdy. *Profiles in Canadian Literature 2*. Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1980. 25-32.
- Ricou, Laurence. *The Arbutus/Madrone Files: Reading the Pacific Northwest*. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2002.
- Ross, Robert H. *The Georgian Revolt 1910-1922: Rise and Fall of a Poetic Ideal*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965.
- Ross, W.W.E. *Shapes & Sounds: Poems*. Don Mills, ON: Longmans Canada, 1968.
- Rubin, Gayle. "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex." *Toward an Anthropology of Women*. Ed. Rayna R. Reiter. New York: Monthly Review, 1975.
- Said, Edward W. *The World, the Text, and the Critic*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1983.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia UP, 1985.

- Shakleford, Ben A. "Masculinity, the Auto Racing Fraternity, and the Technological Sublime: The Pit Stop As a Celebration of Social Roles." Horowitz 91-110.
- Simon, Myron. "The Georgian Poetic." *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association* 2. Papers of the Midwest Modern Language Association, Number 1. Poetic Theory/Poetic Practice (1969): 121-35.
 <<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0026-3419%281969%292%3C121%3ATGP%3E2.0.CO%3B2-K>>.
- Smith, A. J. M. *The Book of Canadian Poetry: A Critical and Historical Anthology*. Toronto: W.J. Gage, 1957.
- Souster, Ray. Letter to Peter Trower. 20 September 1973. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- Starnino, Carmine. "A is for Axe: Peter Trower's Gruntwork [*Haunted Hills & Hanging Valleys*]." *Books in Canada* 34.6 (2005): 33-37.
- Stead, C.K. *The New Poetic*. London: Hutchinson University Library, 1964.
- Toye, William. *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983.
- Trower, Peter. "A Pocket Autobiography" TS. Unpublished autobiography prepared for Al Purdy 4 October 1985. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University, British Columbia, Canada.
- . *A Ship Called Destiny: Yvonne's Book: Poems of Travel and Love*. Victoria, B.C.: Ekstasis Editions, 2000.
- . *Caulk-Boot Legacy.....Logging Poetry in B.C. Western Windows: A Comparative Anthology of Poetry in British Columbia*. --. Vancouver: CommCept Pub., 1977.
- . *Chainsaws in the Cathedral: Collected Woods Poems 1964-1998*. Victoria, B.C.: Ekstasis Editions, 1999.
- . *Haunted Hills & Hanging Valleys : Selected Poems, 1969-2004*. Madeira Park, B.C.: Harbour Pub., 2004.
- . *Hitting the Bricks: Urban Jazz Poems*. Victoria, B.C.: Ekstasis Editions, 1997.
- . Interview with Mark Diotte. 25 January 2006.
- . Interview with Mark Diotte. 7 February 2005

- . Journal Entry. 16 October 1975. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- . Journal Entry. 9 October 1975. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- . Journal Entry. 19 April 1979. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- . Letter to Al Purdy. 14 May 1972. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- . Letter to Al Purdy. 27 August 1985. Peter Trower Collection. Special Collections, Simon Fraser University Library, British Columbia, Canada.
- . *Ragged Horizons*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1978.
- . *The Slidingback Hills*. Ottawa: Oberon, 1986.
- . *There Are Many Ways*. Victoria, B.C.: Ekstasis Editions, 2002.
- Vermeersch, Paul. "How Poems Work: 'Not-so-Still Life with Damp Beer Tables.'" *Globe & Mail* 21 July 2001: D14.
- Wicken, George. "Wilfred Campbell." *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Literature*. Ed. William Toye. Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1983. 843.
- Wiegman, Robyn. "Unmaking: Men and Masculinity in Feminist Theory." *Gardiner* 31-59.
- Wordsworth, William. "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey." *English Romantic Writers*. Ed. David Perkins. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995. 301-303.
- Wordsworth---. *Preface to the Second Edition of the Lyrical Ballads*. *English Romantic Writers*. Ed. David Perkins. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1995. 423-434.